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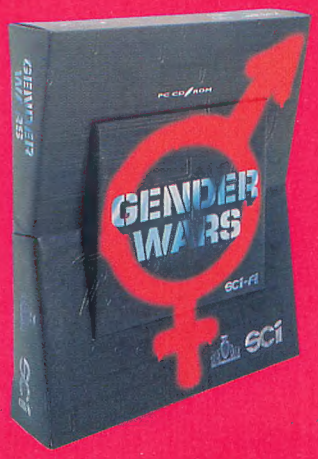

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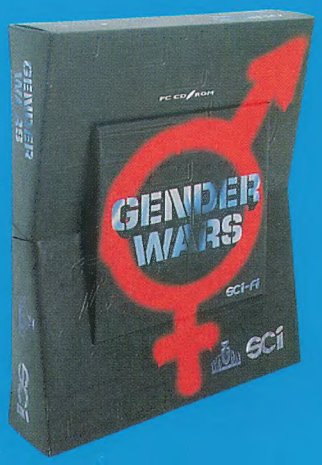

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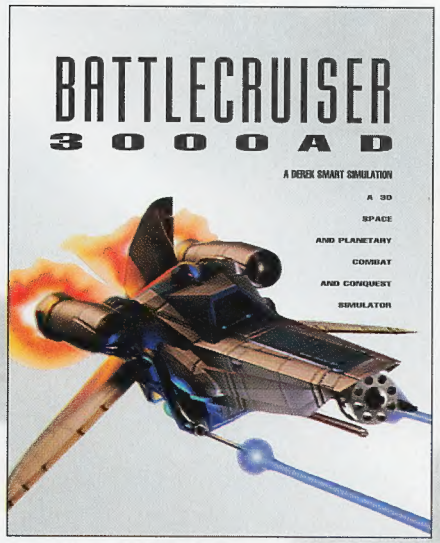

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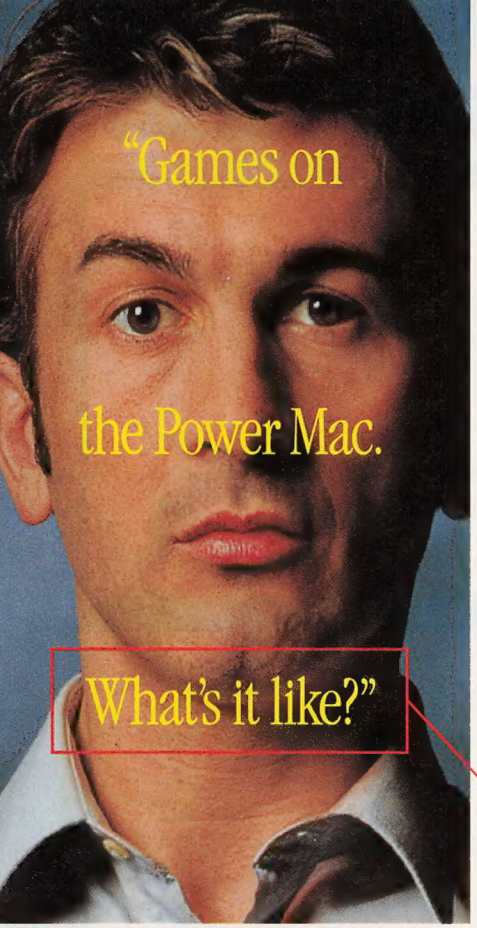

You're standing over a 20-foot putt, and as an expectant hush falls over the crowd this huge 8-foot-tall guy with bionic arms walks out onto the green and does this like, windmill kick that shatters your jaw in 3 or 7 places and you're running low on lives so you jump in your T-80 tank and do 65 mph heading for the trees (slowing to 55 for the sand traps) wasting spectators and oops your caddie along the way and you're racking up the points and feeling pretty good when all of a sudden you hear this beep-beep-beep-beep alarm go off and you've got a bogey on your tail so you drop some chaff and try some evasive maneuvers but to no avail and this explosion rocks you hard and both engines are out so you hit the eject button and suddenly you're floating and down below you see these trees start to materialize and your caddie, somehow miraculously back alive, says "bogey" and you look up but he just means you missed the putt and you missed it bad.

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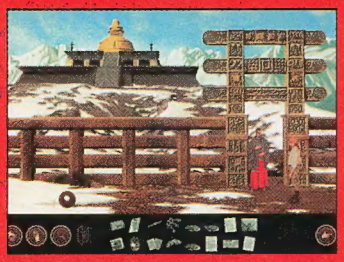
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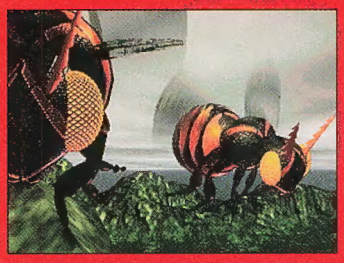
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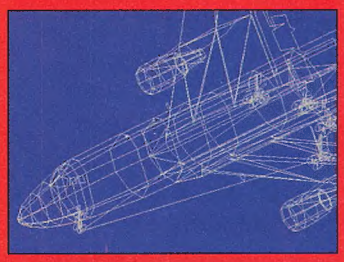
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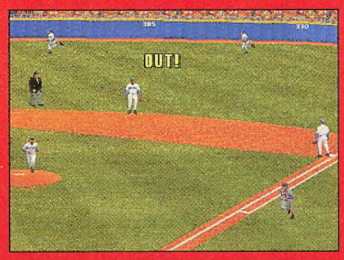

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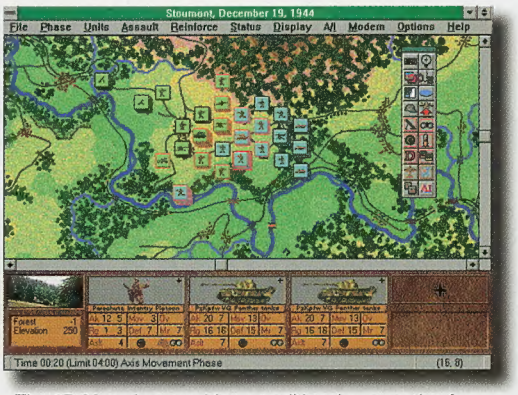

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Read Between the Lines

Psst! Hey buddy, c'mere! A friend of a friend of a friend wants to let you in on a lil' secret, see. Of course we can't mention any names, but he's passing along this hot tip on sumthin' called the *Strategy Plus* Demo CD. Seems this here CD is loaded with all sortsa neat stuff like interactive game demos, custom designed scenarios and even game patches. He says it's packed to the roof with the hottest, er, latest stuff to be coerced out o' 'dem 'dere software vendors.

So here's the lowdown. We want 'cha to read between the lines cause everything in this here magazine can't be read, see. Some of what'cha got there has to be experienced! All ya gotta do is stick this here CD in ya CD drive. Follow the simple instructions and away ya go.

Now I know you're a wargamer at heart, ain't that right? Check out the **Steel Panthers** or **Battleground:Ardennes** demos on this month's CD. Pretty cool stuff, huh? Well, there's plenty more where they came from. What's that? Ya like simulations? Then how's about looking into **Su-27 Flanker, Mechwarrior 2** or **Wing Commander IV**. And need I remind you that there's plenty of arcade, strategy and adventure titles like **Crusader: No Remorse**, **Ascendancy**, **Pitfall** and **Need for Speed** on that little disk just waiting to be unlocked. Ooh, I hate that word but nevertheless there it is. Just remember, you didn't here it from me, got it?

So, forget about needlessly spending what's left of your paycheck downloading huge game demos. Oftentimes they're corrupted long before you ever get to see the credits roll! Instead, rely on Mugsy and the boys at *Strategy Plus* to keep you abreast on the latest happenings in the software industry.

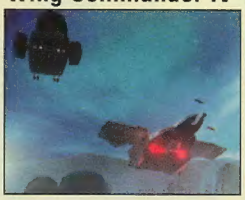
Each and every month, you can expect to find the latest and greatest selection of fully tested game demos. In fact, many of the demos are interactive, allowing you to play the game over the course of several levels. If that weren't enough though, we regularly include the most up-to-the-minute game patches, save games and yes, even custom designed scenarios for many of today's most popular games.

To reserve your copy today, note the details below.

Steel Panthers

Su-27 Flanker

Wing Commander IV



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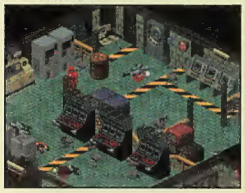
Crusader



Pitfall

We recommend that you first check the "read me" text files included within the subdirectory of each game. Each file contains the appropriate technical support hotline in case you do have a problem installing the game. We regret that *Strategy Plus* can not help you regarding any installation problems. Thanks and enjoy!

Interested parties can obtain this issue's CD-ROM disk by mailing a check or money order for $3 to cover shipping and handling to: *Strategy Plus, Inc.* P.O. Box 21, Hancock, VT 05748. Please indicate which demo (indicate issue number) you are requesting. Sorry, no phone orders will be accepted. Defective CD's will be replaced free of charge by mailing only the CD-ROM disk to the address above. Replacements and/or new orders require four to six weeks for delivery.

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UPFRONT

From the folks who really know how to have fun ...

Like all good aging gamers, I have to gripe periodically about the throes and pains this fast-moving industry is subject to. As an Editor, I'm subject to perhaps more than the usual share of promotional enthusiasm (more cynically called hype) than the average gamer might be; it makes playing the role of Jaded Gamer attractive. As someone who's gotten turned off by the devolution of other forms of entertainment over the years (from theatre to music to movies to plain old TV), I've possibly got more invested than the average normal person in the hope that computer entertainment might prove a saving alternative to the ocean of junk I otherwise feel it's all too easy to end up swimming in these days.

Be that all as it may, I have to stop every now and then – despite pressure and encouragement from my team-mates to maintain the crusty editorial persona – and acknowledge that, yes, computer gaming is now probably *the* best entertainment value out there (except for reading, I still hold onto that as the ultimate), if you're going to rely on more than yourself, a coupla friends and some sports or music equipment (the best fun is always do it yourself).

Think about it – you spend something like $3-8 on a movie (either renting or visiting a posh theatre) for 2 hours of fun. An *average* adventure game – i.e., these days, one you can complete in under twenty hours (and that's probably at the lightest end of the computer gaming spectrum) – gives you ten times the entertainment in sheer amount of time spent. It also costs ten times as much (prices are still going up too much, even if it can be justified with the significantly increased development costs of such things these days), but the kicker here is that *you* control the amount of time, thought, participation you can put into it, without worrying about having to pop for another sitting if the first run-through proved incomplete or unsatisfactory (in other words, you could claim that it's possible to get 20 hours of fun out of a good movie by seeing it over and over again).

Certainly we've seen the industry's share of two- to five- hour miracles show up, and it could be reasonably argued that someone shelling out $80 for same has a gripe over the expense of the experience (think about how much time that same $80 would buy you in a *FASA Battletech* center, or online!). But those are the exception rather than the rule. It's heartening to see instead that in many of the best current games, gamers are actually getting *more* for their hard-earned money than they ever have before. The number of extra features (modem play, network play, multiple controller type support, etc.) adding to actual play value has increased right alongside those efforts which have dropped the quality of play for the sake of glitz.

The days of glitz rather than gameplay are far from over, but it's also becoming apparent that the industry's making a sincere effort to listen to complaints about lite gaming. For instance, in an adventure recently crossing my desk I was amused to note that part of the box indicated, perhaps anxiously, that what's inside is a *game* – "really, we're not trying to fool you!" – and not just a "cinematic performance" (actual wording changed to protect the innocent).

Adventures are particularly prone to glitz, but even *there* things are improving. In the genres which have more traditionally been this magazine's focus – strategy & wargaming, simulations, role-playing – glitz has definitely arrived, but except for the truly advanced gamer, glitz hasn't meant significant sacrifice in play value. If anything, genres that used to rely pretty abstractly on numbers as adequate representations for real-world phenomena have finally started to make the conversion to more dimensional representations of same. Any variable you can include in a war or strategy game, simulation or role-player, you can also consider representing in another form. The horsepower is now there in PC gaming to both include the range of variables necessary to produce complex situations, *and* provide the visuals and sound to bring those variables to life – as reactions, visual transformations, sonic effects, changes in the gameworld's environment, even, dare I say it, as emotions (the last great untapped frontier of computer gaming).

What this means is that – particularly with the best of the current crop – us gamers really have an embarrassment of riches to choose from now, the likes of which haven't been seen in electric entertainment since, well, the best years of movie-making or TV. While in some ways the era of classic design innovation in computer gaming could be defined as the years 1988-91 – the period when most of the current approaches to computer gaming were first tried out – those ideas always ran up against the limitations of the equipment they were being implemented on. Some were marvels of ingenuity in the way they *used* those limitations to good effect, the way someone "limited" to a simple musical instrument might turn its assumed deficiencies into virtues – but most were comparatively primitive as experiences (ask anyone trying to get a non-gamer enthused over the medium back then). Now, the technological doors are getting blown down, quickly; what's beyond them is an endless, twisty maze of little creative passages, none alike, all of which will be explored to the hilt in the coming decade.

This will place demands like never before on the audience, as well, to keep up with what's possible. The best of this medium requires an audience ready and willing to approach it with high intelligence, patience, curiosity, a willingness to explore and commit (and to call foul when it doesn't live up to its possibilities), a willingness to *participate* actively, the way a good reader will do when involved in rich, complex prose and a deep, inviting subject.

Lite gaming? Pfeh – it's an oxymoron. The greatest successes in this medium have always been those designs which have challenged the audience's intelligence, reflexes, persistence, *involvement*. If you out there, used to more passive forms of entertainment, are getting tired of same, *come on in – the gaming's great!* Oh yeah – if you want some quick, light entertainment there's plenty of that, too – we got everything here.

Steve Wartofsky, Editor

COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

BPA International membership applied for May 1995

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Judgment day at Microsoft

The Microsoft game plan – DOS is dead... RIP

When *Microsoft* throws a party, everyone shows up. When *Microsoft* make an announcement about the future of PC gaming, everyone listens. When you combine the two, well, you get the idea.

In a move that should have surprised no one, *Microsoft* executed DOS at their October 30th Halloween party, an event dubbed "Judgment Day." At least, they executed the poor sap who actually tried to run a DOS game from Windows 95. The doomed one panicked when faced with the dreaded "IRQ, DMA, PORT" question – one of Satan's minions chimed in with the proper answers (no, it wasn't "buy a Mac"); IRQ 6, DMA 6, PORT 6. With Satan overseeing the punishment (no, it wasn't Bill Gates, it was Alex St. John, head Windows Game Evangelist for *Microsoft*), the gamer was sent off to hell. Bill Gates was present (in video only) blowing away a few demonspawn as he became an active participant in **DOOM**. He assured the world that "Windows will be the premium platform for all future games."

In the past, hell was a game for Windows – today it's just the opposite. This event, attended by hardware and software developers from around the world, cemented Windows 95 as the platform of choice for at least the immediate future. Hardware companies are grinding out all sorts of add-ons to make Windows look like a next-generation console (ironic when one considers the add-ons will cost about the same as a PlayStation), while software companies will be moving more and more to 3D for every conceivable type of game (3D strategy games? It's been done before and the head of *Zombie*, Mark Long, confessed he'd love to try one in the new environment). Meanwhile – and this is perhaps the biggest stumbling block to Windows' world domination – everyone will probably need a Pentium 75 or higher, 16 MB of RAM, 16-bit sound, quad-speed CD-ROMs, 3D accelerator cards, and God knows what else to run all this stuff.

The party was really to celebrate the release of DirectX, a series of APIs (Application Programming Interfaces) which will give Windows programmers a standardized access layer to PC hardware when designing. The advantage in this approach is that software will talk to the API and the API will talk to your hardware, thus taking advantage of whatever features your hardware has. This means active support of your specific hardware's advanced features will not depend on the game companies' abilities to negotiate same; that'll all be done in the API driver(s) for your hardware – the game will just "see" the API and the API will delegate various tasks to hardware, or to software drivers, depending on what capabilities your hardware has built-in.

The tools *Microsoft* has developed include DirectDraw, which helps speed up regular 2D bitmap graphics, DirectSound for high-fidelity sound, DirectPlay for multiplayer connectivity, and DirectInput for precise joystick control. Other APIs developed include Direct3D, Reality Lab (a real-time 3D rendering library), OpenGL (a high-end CAD tool), and DirectVideo for accelerating video.

On the hardware front, *ATI* would appear to be bucking the trend toward 3D accelerators somewhat by releasing **Arcade Rage**, a package that includes their new **Video XPression** and native Windows 95 versions of *Accolade*'s **Super Bubsy**, *Sierra*'s **Spacerox** (a stylish **Asteroids** clone), and **Mortal Kombat 3**. This 64-bit accelerator features an MPEG video decoder that doesn't require any CPU interventions and speeds up scrolling. The PCI card is modular in design, which will allow *ATI* to produce low-cost designs.

Other video vendors are also launching new lines. *Brooktree*, a supplier of chips, will now support all of the DirectX interfaces with their MediaStream chipset. *S3*, which has perhaps the most popular chipset in the world (found on, amongst others, the *Diamond Stealth 64*), announced that their current 64-bit chipset is compliant with all DirectX features. The *S3* 868/968 series chips, however, are not fully PCI 2.0-spec compliant; hope for a new generation to replace these soon.

Since 3D is the current preference in game design over 2D, there are an unbelievable number of accelerators designed to make 3D Windows games faster than their DOS counterparts. Perhaps the one with the biggest marketing launch is the **3D Blaster** from *Creative Labs*, which comes with *Bullfrog*'s **Magic Carpet Plus**, *Mindscape*'s **Azrael's Tear** and **CyberSpeed**, *Papyrus*'s **NASCAR Racing**, *PF Magic*'s **Ballz Out!** and *Looking Glass*' **Flight Unlimited**. It features *Creative True Texture* perspective-correct texture mapping (the textures will not warp up close, as they do on arcade games like **Daytona** or the *Sony* PlayStation). The **3D Blaster** will support all 3D APIs.

The **3D Blaster** is based on the GLINT chip from *3D Labs*, who were on hand to demonstrate their next generation 3D chip, called the **Permedia**. It is already promising four times the performance of the current generation 3D chips (none of which have actually shipped as of the writing of this article). Future **3D Blaster**s will use this chip.

Not displaying officially at the show was the *Diamond* Edge, another 3D card that also offers digital sound. *Domark* was showing **Absolute Zero** running on the *Diamond* at 640 x 480 x 65,000 colors and to say it was, erm, *absolutely* stunning would be an understatement. Where the original game features an extremely polygonal-looking landscape, the combination of Gouraud shading and 65,000 colors made for a spectacular landscape, all running glass smooth. On the sound front, *AMD* is releasing a chip, the Am78C201, which provides a single-chip audio solution. *Reveal* has signed up to provide a wavetable audio card based on it.

On the virtual reality front, all of the major VR gear, such as *Forte*'s **VFX-1**, *Victormaxx*' **Cybermaxx**, and*Virtual i-o*'s **Virtual i-Glasses** are all supported by Windows 95. Other companies are trying alternate pseudo-VR solutions (at a much lower cost), such as *Stereographics*' **SimulEyes** and *NuVision*'s stereoscopic 3D glasses. A company called *EXOS* demonstrated the **PowerStick**, a joystick which provides feedback (with **NASCAR Racing**, driving on the grass causes it to vibrate while hitting the wall causes it to lurch violently in the other direction). *Spacetec* was also on-hand showing their odd **Spaceball Avenger**, their 3D controller.

Multi-player is all the rage, with *Catapult*'s **XBAND** PC network (previously available on the Genesis and SNES), **DWANGO** and *Microsoft*'s PlayerNet simplifying modem connections. While **XBAND** and **DWANGO** are subscriber services, PlayerNet is designed to simplify modem to modem and network connections (this technology will be first used in **Golf 2.0 CD-ROM**). It includes a chat facility. Of

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Reader Service No. 102

Judgment Day (cont)

course it doesn't take a rocket scientist to think that *Microsoft* will use it to link up to the *Microsoft Network* for a little pay-per-play on-line gaming.

On the software front, a quick peek at the chart of upcoming releases shouldn't surprise regular *Strategy Plus* readers, as we've been covering the majority of the titles in the last few months. Aside from a Windows 95 version of *Westwood*'s astonishingly successful (300,000 units moved to distributors, and counting) **Command & Conquer**, the one game that was perhaps the one that readers are most interested in is the product that shows *Microsoft*'s commitment to hardcore gaming: they will be releasing *Atomic Games*' **Close Combat**, a real-time wargame of small-unit tactics. With DirectSound, DirectInput and multi-player strategy using DirectPlay, this Windows 95 (and Macintosh) title will certainly be one to watch for in 1996. When you combine *Atomic*'s considerable skill with AI and design with *Microsoft*'s marketing and distribution, one has to wonder if this will be the wargame that *really* breaks through to the masses (on a level that even a **Panzer General** could not attain). Like **Flight Simulator** – now the longest-selling product from *Microsoft*, by the way, with the end of MS-DOS' lifespan complete – the commitment to **Close Combat** is evidence the company will continue to focus on serious, in-depth entertainment titles, along with the more characteristic "boot it up for ten minutes' play in your work environment" approach *Microsoft* has taken of late.

It should be clear that *Microsoft* is highly involved with providing a gaming environment. While it may strike fear into the heart of many, it should also be seen as the ultimate compliment to the industry. *Microsoft* will bring even more credibility to the viability of serious PC games (assuming they carry through on their promise of dabbling in all genres, save adventures, due to Bill Gates' involvement with *Dreamworks SKG*). What if that elusive mass-market finally samples a few "real" games and ends up liking them? If they do, this could signal the beginning of a whole new generation of quality software, with innovation and experimentation today's software cannot possibly risk. We shall see.

Steve Bauman

Upcoming Windows 95 titles

Company	Game
Accolade	Super Bubsy
Activision	Atari 2600 Action Pack 3
	Earthworm Jim
	Spycraft: The Great Game
	Elk Moon Murder
	Zork Nemesis
	HyberBlade
	MechWarrior 2
Bullfrog	Dungeon Keeper
Domark	Absolute Zero
	Big Red Racing
Electronic Arts	Shock Wave Assault
	Space Hulk 2
id Software	Doom 95
	Doom II
	Hexen
Interplay	Dragon Dice
LucasArts	The Dig
	Rebel Assault II
MicroProse	Virtual Karts
	CivNet
	Magic: The Gathering
Microsoft	Return of Arcade
	Golf 2.0 CD-ROM
Mindscape	USS Ticonderoga
	CyberSpeed
	Warhammer: Shadow of the Horned Rat
New World Computing	Chaos Overlords
	Empire II: The Art of War
	Spaceward Ho! 4.0
	Heroes of Might & Magic
Origin	Wing Commander IV
PF Magic	Dogz
Reality Bytes, Inc.	HAVOC
Sierra	Thexder
Sony Interactive	Twisted Metal
	WarHawk
Spectrum HoloByte	Knight Moves
SSI	Allied General
	DeathKeep
	Su-27 Flanker
Time Warner Interactive	Return Fire
Westwood Studios	Command & Conquer
Zombie	Ice & Fire
	Locus

Divine intervention

LucasArts has decided to get cosmic with an upcoming Windows-based strategy game called **Afterlife**, which allows the player to manage Heaven and Hell. Since we've referred to these types of games as "God" games for years, I suppose it was inevitable that someone would literally do one of them. Though **SimWrath** would have been an interesting title, this 1996 release puts the player in charge of accommodating the needs of wandering souls. Each soul has its own belief, and if you keep them happy, all is well. If all of their needs aren't met, all hell, I mean, chaos ensues.

A mighty Arsenal

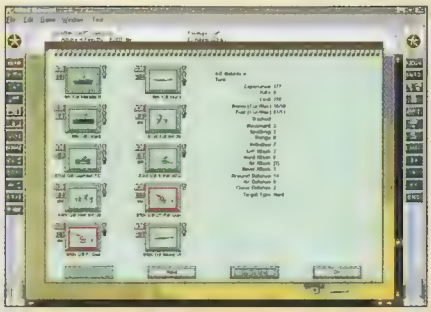
Arsenal Publications, Inc. is gearing up for a big year in '96. The Windows version of **TacOps** should be out by the end of the year, and will be followed by **Panzers East** in the first quarter. **Panzers East** improves on the **TacOps** engine, with one of the biggest changes being the new terrain model. It uses 3D world terrain modeled to a granularity of one meter. There is also talk of a **Panzers East**-engine game covering North Africa, and **TacOps 2**, currently scheduled for late in '96.

Other titles include *Star Games*' **Pacific Tide : The Rise and Fall of the Japanese Empire 1941-1945**, and *Battle Flag Simulations*' **Road to Moscow**. **Pacific Tide** is a strategic level game featuring the most current OB data ever used in a wargame. The data for the OB's is being translated from documents recently de-classified by the Japanese government. **Road to Moscow** is a remaking of the C-64 game of the same name. This is another strategic level game, obviously dealing with the Eastern Front. A **Road to Berlin** title is also scheduled.

Commanded & Conquered

If you're one of the two or three fans of **Command & Conquer** (two or three gazillion, that is) you already know that **Command & Conquer II : Tiberium Sun** is in the works for late next year. If you're starting to shake, wondering how you'll deal with your **C&C** withdrawal until then, rejoice! *Westwood* has announced an interim product, **Command & Conquer: Red Alert**. **Red Alert** will use the same engine as the first game (**Tiberium Sun** is scheduled to get the SVGA treatment), and will basically offer you more of what you loved in **C&C**. It is billed as a prequel — the events taking place before tiberium landed on earth. We're promised larger maps and better AI. Look for **Command & Conquer: Red Alert**, sometime this spring.

HyperBlade



Allied General

Virtual Karts

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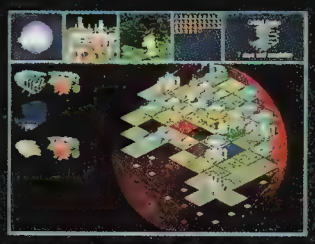

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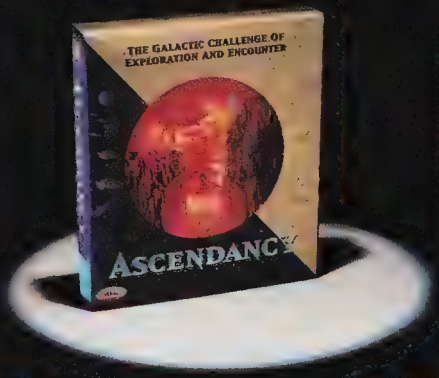

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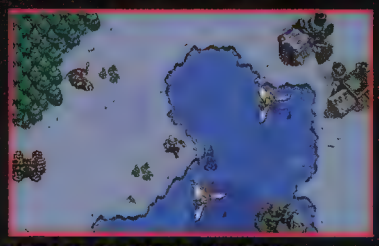

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Worms

I'm here to tell you about *Ocean*'s upcoming title, **Worms** (designed by UK developers *Team 17*). Now hold on just a minute! Don't go shrugging this one off, assuming it's some kind of arcade platform game. It's not. **Worms** can be best described as a cross between **Lemmings** and that shareware classic, **Scorched Earth**.

The goofy premise is that you have a team of worms armed to the teeth, your goal being to kill off the other teams. The game is turn-based, with one worm per team moving each round. When a worm turns, it can both move and then fire one of many weapons, the standard being a bazooka. Firing consists of judging the angle of a shot, and then how much energy to put into it.

Depending on the weapon used, you'll have to compensate for the effects of wind and gravity; high angle shots tend to be the norm. Wherever the missile impacts, it blows away a chunk of the terrain (and some worm flesh, if you're accurate). It takes more than a bit of skill to lob a cluster bomb over an ancient demonic statue and land it on the head of your opponent. Each worm starts with a set amount of energy; every weapon hit detracts from that figure (for instance, a shotgun blast does 25 points of damage). When a worm hits zero energy, it pulls out a TNT detonator and blows itself up (sometimes taking other nearby worms with it).

In addition to weapons, worms can use drills and blowtorches to tunnel through terrain, girders to cross over chasms, and bungee cords to descend safely. Many playing fields hold water or lava that will destroy any worm that falls into it immediately, so simply blasting your worm ass over elbow into the drink can be an effective strategy.

Watching these hapless creatures being flung back and forth across the screen by heavy weapons is the sick sort of entertainment some of us live for. The worms are disgustingly cute, cursing and boasting as they do in squeaky hi-pitched voices. You'll enjoy killing these critters; trust me.

At the end of a match, various awards are given out to the participants (Most Violent Worm, Most Picked-On Worm, Most Useless Worm, etc.). The computer opponent is pretty deadly, but *Team 17* will also provide multiplayer modes via the usual technologies. The advance copy of **Worms** I played didn't have everything in it yet (I'm told I missed out on the exploding sheep!), but I'm hooked already.

The future at Spectrum Holobyte

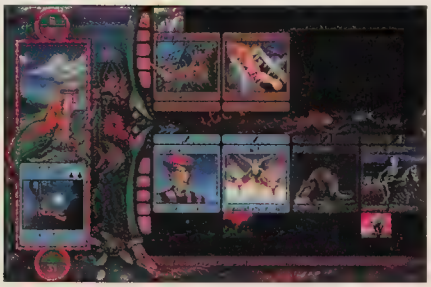
Consolidation, licensing deals, and consoles... oh, and some new games

After what for many of us seems like a long dry spell for such a big company to be going through, we were invited out to the Pasadena *Ritz Carlton* to hear *Spectrum Holobyte*'s game-plan for the near and far future. What is immediately apparent is that the company is currently convinced of two industry truths: that the console share of the market is going to continue to grow, and that the way into the hearts and minds of the computer consumer is through licenses and series.

SH are backing *Sony* in the console wars – that's clear. **X-COM: UFO Defense**, **Gunship 2000**, **Transport Tycoon**, **Top Gun** and **Star Trek:Generations** are all planned for the PSX. *SH* are also committed to the Ultra64, as they're planning a version of **Top Gun** for that platform.

For an audience wanting CD-ROM archiving of older games they continue to enjoy, *SH* has no less than two value lines planned as well: the *Classic Series*, which includes **Tetris Classic**, **Subwar 2050 Plus**, **Machiavelli the Prince**, **Pizza Tycoon, Master of Orion**, and **X-COM**; and *Player's Choice*, which will include **Fields of Glory**, **Gazillionaire**, **Dragonsphere**, **Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon, Return of the Phantom**, and **NFL Coaches Club Football**.

SH still think Alexey Pajitnov is the nicest darn Russian they've ever met, and another of his puzzle games is in the works for Windows 95, called **Knight Moves**.



Magic: The Gathering

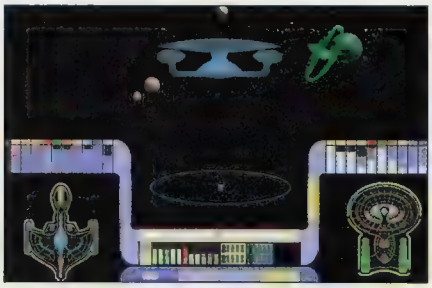
New licensing

Possibly the biggest news out of the whole event is that *FASA* has signed a licensing deal with the *Paramount/ABC/ Spectrum Holobyte* megamonster. Assuming the programming talent is in place to work quickly, the combined resources of the above companies could theoretically lead to one of the most productive and successful integrations of paper gaming, computer gaming and multimedia ever to hit the industry. *FASA* is one of the most thoroughly-developed future-tech mythologies out there for the gaming world, and has yet to be brought to life in its full glory in the medium you'd think would be best suited for it.

New titles:

Star Trek: Generations is a Windows 95 title, based on the movie. This is basically a first-person shooter, with a little strategy thrown in. The company indicates they're going to have all of the voices from the members of the movie, including Patrick Stewart and William Shatner.

Citizens: This is a present-day strategy game. Given the information we've seen so far, this sounds like **Civ** meets the day-time soaps. Imagine having to negotiate treaties with rejected former suitors while contending with the screams of anguish from your recently-divorced spouse. Genghis Khan was never this terrifying.



Star Trek: Generations

Civilization 2000: The designers are going to upgrade the graphics of **Civ** and add a sixth level, Divinity, for those of us who feel slighted by having been limited to Emperor level in the original. The diplomacy engine and combat system will be receiving upgrades, and we should see some new Wonders as well.

Master of Antares: See the preview on page 43.

Super Heroes: Also from *SimTex*. It's 2091, and life's a bitch. You lead your team of superheroes against the forces of evil. You can create your own hero or choose from 24 prefab types. This will be multiplayer.

Master of Star Trek: Company representatives spoke about this during their huge presentation session. This is a strategy game based on the *Star Trek* license

ABC Sports: The only tangible information we could squeeze out of PR is that a design focused on *Monday Night Football* would possibly be one of the first titles, and that they would hope to try to have it ready by the start of the '96 season.

Updates

CivNet: Nearing completion, it will now include a multiplayer online mode for internet. To help players who want to find opponents, there will be a **CivNet** section at *MPS'* web site.

Magic: The Gathering: Now planned for Windows 95. Meier has been brought in to work on this. He's programming an adventure-game segment based on the original card game. If you just can't wait for the game you can get **Magic: The Gathering Desktop Illusions**, a screen saver featuring art from the original card game.

While many remain hesitant to jump up and cheer just yet – massive delays in much-anticipated projects, the dropping of other projects dearly hoped-for, stories about massive consolidations and lay-offs and refocusings and negotiations all add up to a skeptical wait-and-see attitude for even the most dedicated of *SH/MicroProse* fans – we've seen these companies go through wild oscillations in the past, – and they've always come out swinging and ready to take on the world. Our guess is that it'll take a little while more for all the dust to settle, but that there's still massive talent present – and massive talent waiting to join up – and that, with enough patience and financing and commitment to the long term, *Spectrum Holobyte* and its affiliates will end up creating more than enough for gamers to enjoy in the coming year.

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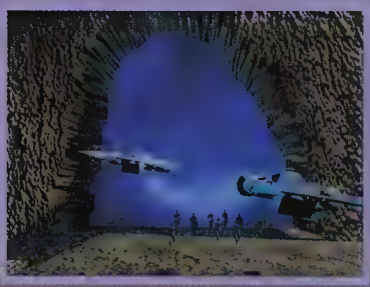

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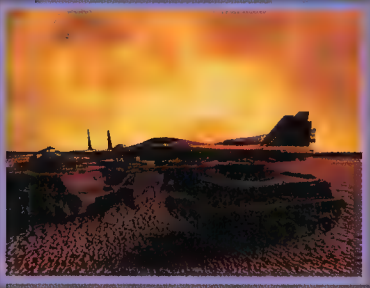

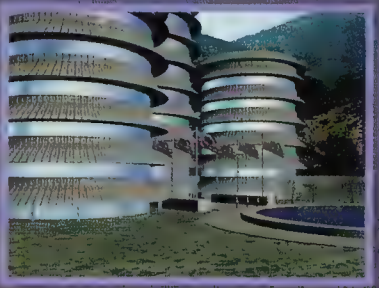

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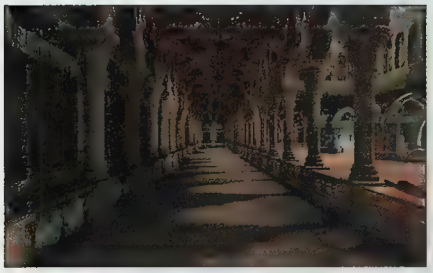
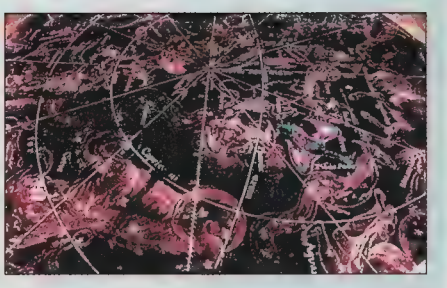
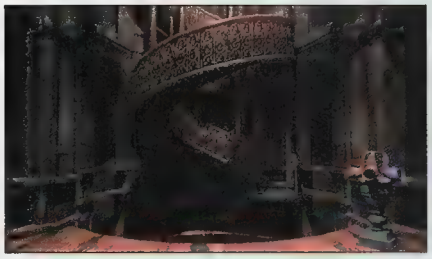
Zork Nemesis

Return to Zork in the follow up to, uh, Return to Zork

Zork. The mere mention of that name conjures up images of one of the greatest series of games on the personal computers. The irony is, of course, that the images that I speak of exist only in our imaginations, since the "real" **Zork**s were the all-text adventures (available in the ten-thousand *Infocom* collections that *Activision* have bestowed upon us).

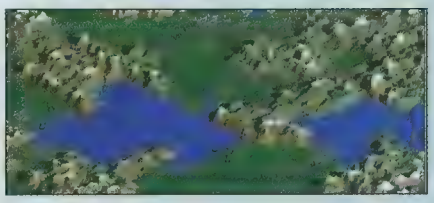
Return to Zork came out in 1993 under the *Infocom* name and was a groundbreaking game. First off, it was one of the early CD-enhanced games (a floppy version was available as well – on about twenty floppies), and secondly it brought real actors and graphics to the world of **Zork** (it's hard to count **Zork Zero** or **Beyond Zork** as being too much of a graphic adventure – they were still predominantly text-based). It hasn't aged well, technology wise (the industry moves mighty fast nowadays), but it was a quality adventure. The fact that Eddie Dombrower, of **Earl Weaver Baseball** fame (and infamy, for the sequel) produced the thing was another striking oddity in the game design universe.

Zork Nemesis returns the player to a new dimension of the Zork universe – the uncharted and no doubt quirky Forbidden Lands (which are already looking quite stunning in their new SVGA graphics). It lies somewhere beyond the underworld, and the player is somehow lured into this region and are faced with a doomed empire. Players are forced to confront a desperate and evil spirit called the Nemesis; in order to escape the universe (and presumably to win the game), the player must discover the mystery of the land's curse. In addition to this, you will uncover the act of betrayal that was the catalyst for the creation of the Forbidden Lands. I just bet it was that damn Dimwit Flathead.

Windows 95 will be the home of this latest multimedia marvel, which you can expect to see sometime in 1996. Until then, OPEN MAILBOX... TAKE LETTER... READ LETTER...

Xenosphere

The new Accolade gears up for some intergalactic strategy



The new *Accolade* is committed to building exceptional games, period. They acknowledge that previous games have lacked focus, and that they often went for quantity over quality. They are working on keeping the quality of their branded products high, such as **Hardball**, the **Jack Nicklaus** line, and **Star Control**. Their sports games, in particular, are going to receive extra care under the tutelage of Kevin Hogan, formerly one of the top producers at *EA Sports*.

Deviating slightly from their branded lineup is a new isometric strategy game which is currently being referred to as **Xenosphere** (working title). The game is a resource management design, described as a cross between **Civilization** and **SimCity** (and what isn't?). The premise is that a number of beings in the galaxy have been fighting to colonize all of the remaining habitable planets in the solar system. Realizing their fighting is itself destroying the planets they're trying to colonize, the beings decide to strike a deal – whoever can create five cities on any planet rules that planet; the others must leave. Along the way to building your city, the player will have to build resources and advance their technology in order to progress faster.

The game will feature seven races of aliens, plus the humans. Another race are the wild cards – the mercenaries. For a few bucks they can be hired to torment and sabotage your opponents. Look for a release sometime in the middle of 1996.

Tales of the White Wolf

No, we're not talking Elric here. Bill Bridges has left *White Wolf* (the paper RPG game company) to become a partner in *HDI*. *HDI*, whose credits include **Machiavelli the Prince** and **Hammer of the Gods,** are in the midst of developing **Space Marine** for *Mindscape* and **Emperor of the Fading Suns** for *Gametek*.

Bridges' past credits include game developer, novelist, and scriptwriter, as well as over 40 credits for his involvement with various *White Wolf* projects. He joins *HDI* founders Ed Pike and Ken Lightner, and former fellow *White Wolf*er Andrew Greenberg (**Vampire: The Masquerade**).

QQP's Northlands

Northlands is a huge RPG which, we're told, has one difference from many other CRPG's out there: it was designed by role players, not computer game designers.

In **Northlands**, events do not revolve around a single individual. Instead, players participate in an on-going and realistic world. The game forgoes the traditional class based system. Instead, a character's abilities are based on skill levels, and he or she will improve in those skills he or she uses the most.

Mixing a solid role playing core with some of the strategy elements that *QQP* is famous for, **Northlands** hopes to push back the frontiers of the CRPG world.

Pointless software of the month club...

Totally Twisted Screen Saver

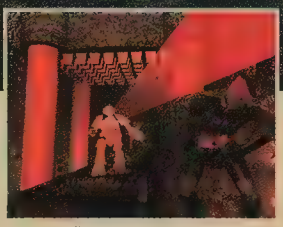
Screen savers are pointless. Monitor technology has changed over the years so that the fear of burn-in, which was a real possibility a few years ago, should be non-existent. That hasn't stopped *Berkeley Systems* from selling an absurd number of their screen savers. Admit it. You probably own one of their packages (flying toasters, cute kittens, *Star Trek*, *The Simpsons*).

Their latest screen saver, the **Totally Twisted Screen Saver**, is the most vile, repulsive, sadistic, morally repugnant, obnoxious, offensive, revolting, and, erm, twisted piece of software ever released. It's offensive on so many levels that it's a wonder it would ever be released.

Which is what makes it the most indispensable piece of software you can own. Who wouldn't want a screen saver that has chameleons that vomit on your screen (and do the nasty), a thing called Phlegm Boy (who needs no further explanation), bungee cows (with poor cables), flying toilets, mime hunting, and "Mowin' Boris? "

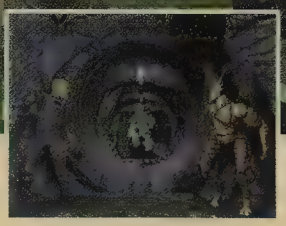
The most twistedly brilliant product of the year. Your holidays won't be complete without it.

HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND ANNIHILATE ENEMIES



Infiltrate the enemy Comm Bunker.

You've crashed on a strange planet. You quickly become friends with the local alien, Gaan. Together, you'll go from hauling butt through the forest to blasting into a bomb-filled mine shaft to fighting through an armory to destroy a reactor. It's Alien Odyssey -- the PC CD-ROM game with incredibly smooth character animation and Argonaut's exclusive 3D adventure game technology. It's total annihilation. But in a friendly sort of way.



Use teamwork to solve puzzles and outwit invaders.

ALIEN ODYSSEY

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Reader Service No. 114

OWN THE

"By tapping into the talents of a skilled Russian design group, SSI may have hit the mother lode — the Mother Russia lode, that is."

— Joseph Novicki, PC Gamer Magazine

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- Detailed briefing/de-briefing makes sure you have the latest information. You'll always know what to do — or what went wrong...

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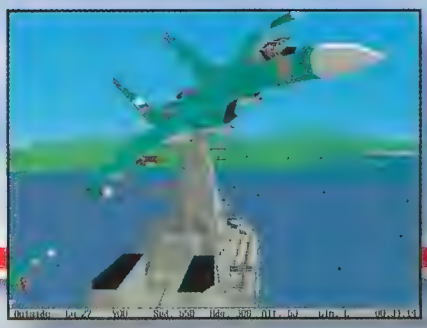

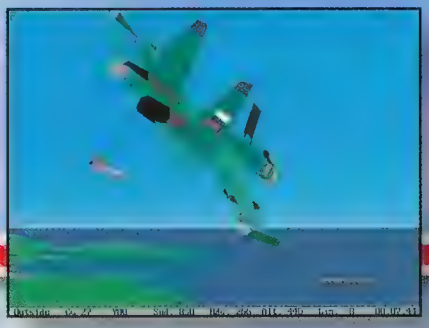

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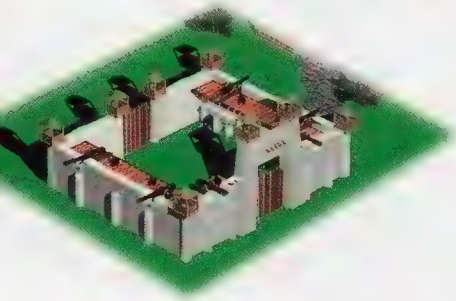
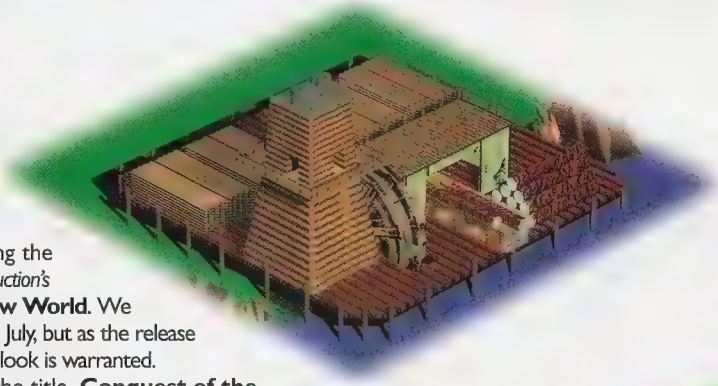
Conquest of the New World

Interplay explores new worlds, in more ways than one





Interplay producer Vince DeNardo and the *Quicksilver Software, Inc.* team are in the midst of putting the finishing touches on *Interplay Production's* upcoming **Conquest of the New World**. We first looked at **Conquest** back in July, but as the release date draws near, we feel a closer look is warranted.

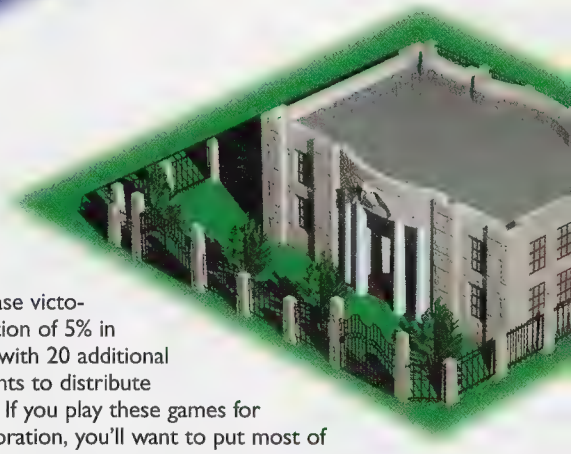
As you might expect from the title, **Conquest of the New World** is a game of exploration and colony building. Broadly speaking, it can be grouped into the same category as *MicroProse's* **Colonization** or *Interactive Magic's* **Exploration**, but **Conquest of the New World** puts a lot more emphasis on the human side of the equation, both in terms of being a solid multi-player game, and in giving the population of the game world goals beyond slaughtering all opponents.

Conquest uses a starting seed to generate a realistic and believable world. The same seed will always generate the same world, so if you get a continent that looks like Elvis, you can share it with your friends. An algorithm based loosely on plate tectonic theory places continents and islands, mountain ranges and rivers. To the North and South are polar ice caps; between these lie appropriate climate zones. The maps are huge. When European explorers first crossed the Atlantic to explore the Western Hemisphere, they faced an area so impossibly large that – had they known the extent of it – they might have thrown up their hands in dismay and sailed on home. Send one of your ships to follow the coastline in **Conquest –** you'll get the same feeling as you see the sheer bulk of unexplored terrain facing you! Happily, the title is somewhat figurative. You don't have to actually *conquer* the entire new world in order to win!

Hand-crafted quality, at an attractive price

The game world is quite attractive; *Quicksilver* has provided us with a range of zoom options, from an anachronistic satellite view of the entire world, down to a view that is so close its only purpose is your viewing pleasure. The fact that objects in this view reveal previously unseen details is a tribute to the devotion of the team. If objects didn't have this level of detail, it wouldn't have affected game play one whit, but it would've lessened the beauty of the product.

So we've established that **Conquest** has a pretty and realistic map. What about the *game*?! Unlike many "explore the hidden world" games, the path to victory here is through accumulation of the most points (though we'll admit that dead opponents don't offer much competition). What's more, you can determine exactly what sorts of actions will give you the most points, and how many they'll give you. The game grants you victory points in four categories: colony building, exploration, diplomacy, and conquest. The catch is, you only get a certain percentage of the points in each of these categories.



Each player starts with a base victory point utilization of 5% in each category, with 20 additional percentage points to distribute between them. If you play these games for the joy of exploration, you'll want to put most of your additional points in exploration. Warmongers will put their points in conquest, negotiators in diplomacy and builders in colony building. Of course, you can distribute your points evenly as well.

In addition, you can spend five percentage points to buy various special abilities, abilities which grant you bonus victory points for specific actions. Knowledge of which (if any) abilities you've purchased is kept from your opponents. The trick, then, is to perform actions gaining you victory points, while fooling other players into thinking they're getting the best of you. The designers have thus deliberately fostered an air of uneasy paranoia between players. Players of the boardgame *Diplomacy* will understand this aspect of the design quite well.

Once you've set up your personal victory conditions, the game begins. You start out – as seems so often the case in these games – with a ship or two and a completely unexplored world. On your ships are the explorers, armies and settlers you'll need to tame the vast wilderness before you. Movement is as simple as dragging a path from the ship, or holding <CTRL> and clicking on a spot you want the ship to sail to. Double-clicking on the ship will pop up a menu which allows you to examine the "cargo" (settlers, explorers and armies), disembark all units or order the ship to explore.

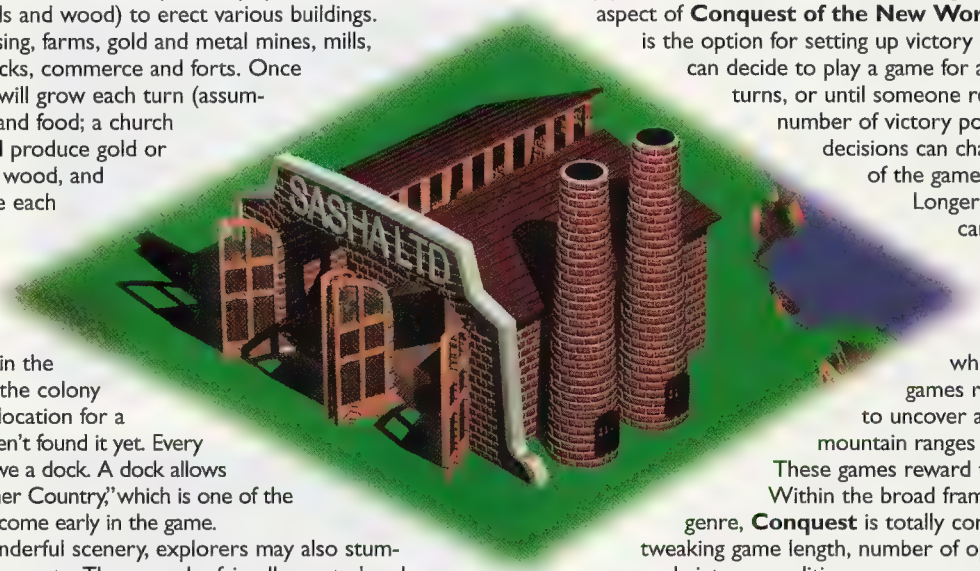
Automatons on parade

This last function bears closer study. When you tell a ship to explore it will sail off on its own. If there's a coastline nearby, the ship will follow it, revealing the outline of the island or continent in question. If there *isn't* a coastline, the ship will strike out randomly into the darkness. This same function is available on land with

explorer units, who make a concerted effort to reveal any hidden areas they find. Such auto-exploration is a nice touch, because it eases the micro-management demands on the player. Early in the game, when you have only a handful of units, you'll probably enjoy telling each unit exactly where to go. But as the frontier expands and you have other demands placed on you, you'll appreciate this ability to automate units. Make no mistake, though, there will still be times when a unit requires your personal attention.

Once one of your ships makes landfall, you'll debark explorer units and set them to revealing the mysterious interior of this unknown world. During their journeys they'll discover the highest mountains, the longest rivers and the best settlement areas. Each of these discoveries results in earning points (the amount depending on how high/long/wide the mountain/river/area is and what percentage of exploration points the player has set himself up to get). The owning player also gets to exercise his narcissistic tendencies and name these geologic features. Thereafter these names will appear on the map, once uncovered. There's nothing quite so frustrating as sending an explorer to the top of a mountain peak, only to discover an opponent has beaten you to it and left a "Kilroy was here" sign!

Once the explorers have found a suitable location, it's time to send in the settlers to form a colony. Each colony has certain commodities: gold, metal, goods, wood and crops. The player uses some of these (primarily metals and wood) to erect various buildings. Buildings include housing, farms, gold and metal mines, mills, taverns, churches, docks, commerce and forts. Once established, a colony will grow each turn (assuming sufficient housing and food; a church helps, too). Mines will produce gold or metals, mills produce wood, and so on. You must place each building in a suitable location. Mines do best near mountains, farms near rivers. Every building must be within the "command radius" of the colony center. If the perfect location for a colony exists, we haven't found it yet. Every early colony should have a dock. A dock allows trading with the "Mother Country," which is one of the few solid sources of income early in the game.



Along with the wonderful scenery, explorers may also stumble across native settlements. These can be friendly, neutral or hostile. If the latter, the explorer can usually avoid them. If he fails, well, you can always get more explorers, right? Friendly natives might trade with the player. They generally don't produce much, but can be a good source of extra food in a pinch. As players expand their knowledge of the region and begin to encounter each other's colonies, they may trade among themselves. This is a perfect opportunity for a player with the Trader special ability to rack up extra victory points!

If the player encounters hostile natives, it may be time to bring in the troops. Alternatively, at some point two players may come to blows. On board the ship are one or more leaders, and each leader has troops "attached" to him (many units in the game can contain others, insofar as their on-screen representations are concerned. This allows you to move armies across the map without showing dozens of sprites marching to and fro, obscuring everything else happening). Combat, which occurs at the end of a player's turn, has a completely different look from the rest of the game (see pg.28). Once you have your colonies firmly established, you can think about expanding. You can upgrade all your buildings, or increase trade with the Mother Country, the natives, or other players. You can produce more settlers to establish another colony, more explorers, or expand your military might.

Something for everyone?

Throughout this article, I've referred rather generically to "your opponents." **Conquest of the New World** was designed, from the start, as a multiplayer game. You can find opponents at the other end of a modem line, over a network, or through your email box. Extensive diplomacy options are available; you can make friends by sending an opponent almost anything. You can even give him or her credit for a discovery!

But in case you can't round up a bunch of friends to play with, *Quicksilver* is devoting many resources to creating computer opponents that act as "human" as possible. In particular, the AI won't single you out as the only wetware, and therefore worthy of being every AI's primary target (I hate games that do that!). It seems that, finally, the game development community is starting to push back the barriers to realistic AI.

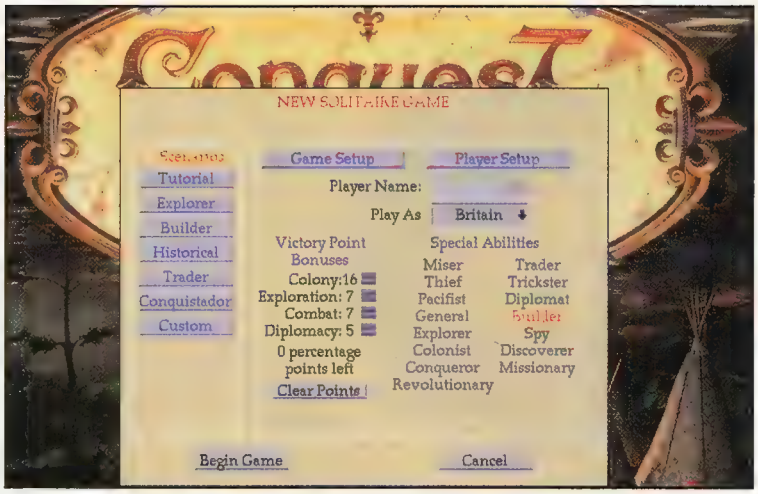
Conquest of the New World is a much anticipated product in the *Strategy Plus* offices. It seems to provide something for everyone. The more military of us look forward to new continents to conquer. Others anticipate long hours of exploring uncharted regions, and still others just want to win bragging rights by beating all comers in network play.

My personal tastes run towards building empires. One aspect of **Conquest of the New World** I really like is the option for setting up victory conditions. You can decide to play a game for a set number of turns, or until someone reaches a certain number of victory points. These decisions can change the flavor of the game immensely. Longer games require careful planning for the future and reward colonizers, while shorter games result in a dash to uncover and name mountain ranges and rivers. These games reward the explorer. Within the broad framework of the genre, **Conquest** is totally configurable. By tweaking game length, number of opponents and personal victory conditions, you can make it a game of exploration, or of diplomacy, or empire building...whatever strikes your fancy. **Conquest of the New World** has beauty, brains and depth. If Vince DeNardo and *Quicksilver* can manage to weave all these aspects together correctly, while keeping the end result solid and playable, they will have set a new standard for all future "explore the hidden world" games to aspire to.

Peter Smith

More on next page...

The smoking cannon indicates the guilty party, as a casualty falls from his horse. That's gotta hurt!



This shot shows all the settings for players in a custom game. In addition to distributing points, a player can, for 5 points, buy special abilities from the list on the right

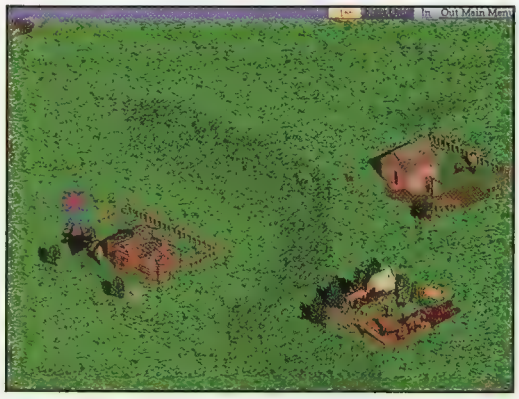
Combat in the New World

Combat in **Conquest of the New World** is played out on a stylized battlefield that looks something like a chessboard. There is a three by four grid, with a reserve area running along each of the shorter sides. Each army starts in one of these reserve areas; the central square in the last row of each side contains a flag. Battles are a capture-the-flag affair; if an army moves one of its units into the square containing the flag of its opponent, it wins the battle.

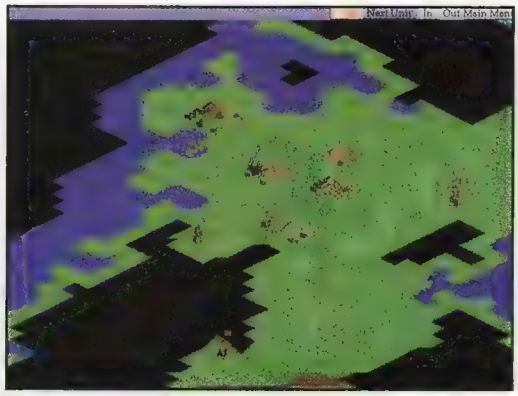
Units consist of infantry, cavalry and artillery. Infantry can move one space or fire at an adjacent square. Cavalry can move two spaces, or move one space and fire at an adjacent square, or make a charge attack. Artillery moves one space or fires at any square in a row. Artillery is the only unit with a ranged attack. Beyond these basics, there are more relationships that influence a unit's worth. For instance, at first glance infantry is quite weak. However, infantry attack artillery (arguably the strongest units) with devastating results. Units also get an attack bonus for flanking fire and combined arms attacks.

Each army has a leader that has an attack rating. An army can only attack a number of times equal to its leader's attack rating. Thus, an army with ten infantry units would need its leader to have at least a rating of ten if the player wanted every unit to attack in a given turn.

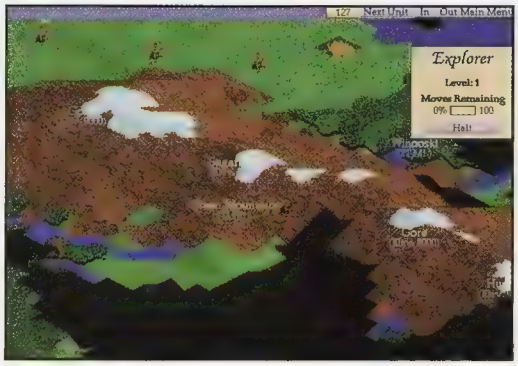
When you first look at the combat module of **Conquest**, it's easy to dismiss it as trivial. But once you start to play it, and learn its subtleties, you'll find that it stands pretty well as a game in its own right; a nice alternative for when you don't have enough time to play a full game of **Conquest of the New World**.



This extreme close-up of some early buildings clearly shows the wonderful detail Quicksilver put into the game.



There's plenty of room for everyone!



Discovery of a mountain range is good for lots of points, as long as you fancy yourself an explorer

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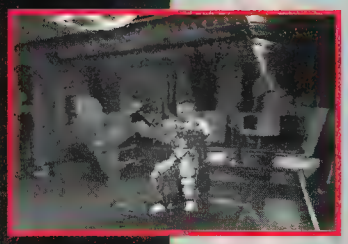

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Battle Isle 2220: Shadow of the Emperor

The story so far....

*In **Battle Isle 2200** (designed by Blue Byte and released in the US by **Accolade**) players stepped into the shoes of Val Harris, an earthling transported to the planet Chronos. On Chronos, his task was to take control of the Drull forces and beat back the army of the evil Titan-Net. For his troubles, he became ruler of Chronos.*

In the time since then, Val has married and had a son, Ben. Now Ben is stepping into the shoes of his father, but he is not the beneficent ruler Val was. Through a series of events depicted in a lengthy introduction, Caro, ruler of the Kai, has declared war on Drull. *Blue Byte's* **Battle Isle 2220: Shadow of the Emperor** puts you in control of Caro as she attempts to gather the people of Kai around her and conquer Chronos.
But all is not quite as it seems...

So who are these Blue Byte people?

Blue Byte is a well-known software development house in its native Germany, but here in the states they've had trouble in the past with distribution. As mentioned above, the most recent game in the **Battle Isle** series, **Battle Isle 2200**, was published by *Accolade* but never got the exposure it deserved. Another title, **The Settlers,** was published in the US by *SSI* under the name **Serf City: Life is Feudal**. The game got favorable reviews and those who tried it generally liked it (according to the unscientific data collection method known as net surfing), but *SSI* never gave it the push it deserved.

In light of all this, *Blue Byte* has decided to take matters into their own hands, and have just recently opened an office in the US. This should be good news for North American gamers: the current *Blue Byte* line-up looks pretty hot (see recent coverage of ECTS for details) and the new office should guarantee that we get to see them all!

For those not familiar with the series, **Battle Isle 2220: Shadow of The Emperor** is a turn-based strategy game depicting military conquest. Various kinds of tanks mix with giant robots, aircraft, ships, and the like. This is the first **Battle Isle** to run under Windows, and *Blue Byte* has done a good job of using the strengths of that environment without giving the game a generic Windows look. When **BI2220** runs, it covers your entire screen with a solid background, over which is laid various windows. One window shows the map, another shows the playing field, yet another shows a unit's stats, etc. The bigger windows can be resized, and all can be dragged around the screen until you get the layout that works best for you.

This **Battle Isle** includes lots of multimedia glitz. As mentioned, the intro is quite long, and tells the whole story of what has happened in the past as well as the events which have brought you to this point today. This FMV is sharp (but not full screen), though the voice synching is very rough. Actually, it's rough enough that it appears stylized, rather than just inaccurate (we suspect this is intentional, since it allows *Blue Byte* to port the game into various languages without re-shooting the video). Messages in the midst of gameplay pop-up as mini-movies which give you a weather forecast, or perhaps incoming messages from other leaders on the field of battle. All the multimedia extras come together to set the mood and put you there on the battlefield. In fact, with all the movies between missions, **BI2220** is in some ways reminiscent of a turn-based **Command & Conquer** (a female voice sounding much like EVA's probably helped this impression).

BI2220 missions are grouped into battlesets, and several come with the game. There is a small tutorial battleset. There is a battleset of missions designed specifically for multi-player games. Finally, the largest is the campaign game. This includes the story line and all the movies. As you complete each mission in the campaign game, you are given a password. Once you have this password, you can go back and play the missions over again. We like this concept, but aren't overly fond of any kind of password system. At least in Windows, you can just pop-up Notepad and jot them down.

More dark worlds to explore!

When a mission starts, much of the map is hidden. **BI2220** uses the tri-tone method of map exploration. A hex can either be normal (visible),

dimmed (explored but not in any friendly unit's line of sight or radar range) or opaque (unexplored). Each unit has a specified sighting range, and there are also mobile and fixed radar stations which can peer into the gloom for you. The game flows in very simple phases. One player moves and attacks, then the next, and so on (many missions include more than two players).

One thing we at first found curious is that the entire map is hidden while other players (including computer players) move. Instead of the map, a chart is displayed revealing which player is moving, the number of kills and losses for each side, and other bits of data. When your turn comes back around you can examine a list of units killed, and where they were when they died.

We spoke to **BI2220** Project Manager Patric Lagny about this aspect of the design, and he told us the decision was made based primarily on speed. Fans of the earlier **Battle Isle** games complained of the time it took for the computer to make its moves; not showing the animation produces a 30-40% increase in speed. Additionally, as battles get bigger and bigger, most players can't remember all the battles that took place, anyway (as we recall from Psych. 101, the average person can remember a list of 7-10 items in short term memory; bigger **BI2220** missions can have 20-30 battles happening in a turn). There is no opportunity fire per se, but in each "battle" both sides are apt to win and lose strength points (most units have ten strength points when new). Every time you attack an enemy (and every attack is one-on-one), a battle window pops up to show you the action. This is non-interactive eye candy; you can turn it off if you'd like. We rather enjoyed watching the enemy get blown to bits!

Different units can attack in different ways. Tanks can move and then shoot, and only attack adjacent hexes. Artillery can move *or* shoot, but not both. And of course artillery uses indirect fire. In the early phases of the game we took a liking to the rocket tank. This unit moves and then fires rockets at a target up to two hexes away, and is very deadly. Giant robots act like tanks, but they can also create fortifications. The list goes on and on.

In addition to vehicles, buildings are scattered across the map. These range from plane wrecks to radar installations to tank factories. Every unit starts with a set amount of fuel, ammo, and strength points. By sending a damaged or depleted unit to a building you own, you can return it to its pristine state. In order to do so, two resources are needed: materials and energy. Most buildings generate a bit of each resource every turn (the fiction is that there are mines beneath the buildings), and there are also Aldinium crystals scattered about in some missions. Aldinium provides your war effort with a quick boost in resources. Some buildings also allow you to build new units.
You'll usually start with a few buildings; to capture others, you'll need to move one of your units into it. Only certain units can capture buildings (primarily robots and recon units) and they tend to be the more fragile varieties. It gets tricky, because often the enemy is trying to secure/defend the same building, so the zone around buildings can become particularly lethal for these weaker units. This is indicative of the inter-relationships that keep **BI2220** so interesting—that "rock, paper, scissors" thing. With all the various kinds of units having slightly different functions, we'd guess that each player will find his or her favorites, as well as favorite tactics. As units fight they become more experienced and more deadly. You'll probably want to name your favorite veteran units – **BI2220** lets you do that, too.

Fanfare for the Common Man

Make no mistake, this is not a grognard's game. This is a fast moving, fun game that is very easy to get into, but has some hidden depth. For instance, certain factors that influence combat—proximity of friendly units, terrain, and experience—will probably be ignored by newcomers, who'll focus instead on attack and defense strengths. Once experienced, though, players will certainly want to pay attention to such subtler factors, and they're there to work with.

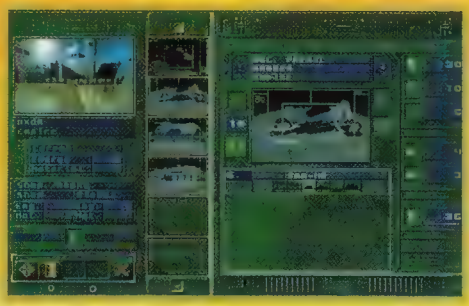
The interface is fairly straightforward, and includes on-line help for use while learning the system (point to anything on the screen and a text box pops up describing what it does). While Tom Clancy has nothing to worry about, the on-going story of political and military power struggle does keep your interest. E-mail, modem and network play are supported, and interestingly, even in solo games you'll have allies (computer controlled).

We're looking at what appears to be a fairly complete beta. In fact, we had no crashes or problems whatsoever. When you mix resource gathering and management with a rebuildable military force, you tend to get games with a great sense of ebb and flow. It gives you that "I've built something" satisfaction that great strategy games provide. You've established an industrial base, built up your forces, vanquished the enemy, and now you're ready for just one more mission. Then one more after that. And OK, one last one, and then its time for bed. And suddenly, there's the glow on the horizon, and the first bird starts to sing. It may be that *Blue Byte* has that kind of game on their hands here, though only some serious time with the final version will say for sure.

Peter Smith

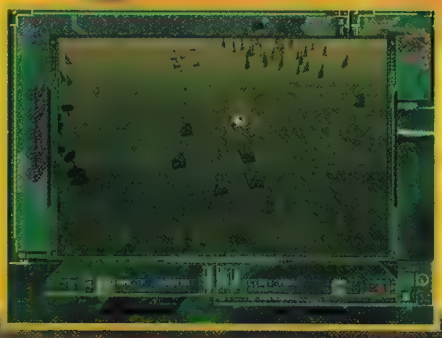
Using Windows means you can customize the screen layout to suit your needs

This is all you see while other players are moving



All kinds of nifty things happen inside buildings...

Kai go-karts... er, recon vehicles in the midst of an attack on Drull APCs!



APC's attack light tanks, and their machine guns take a toll

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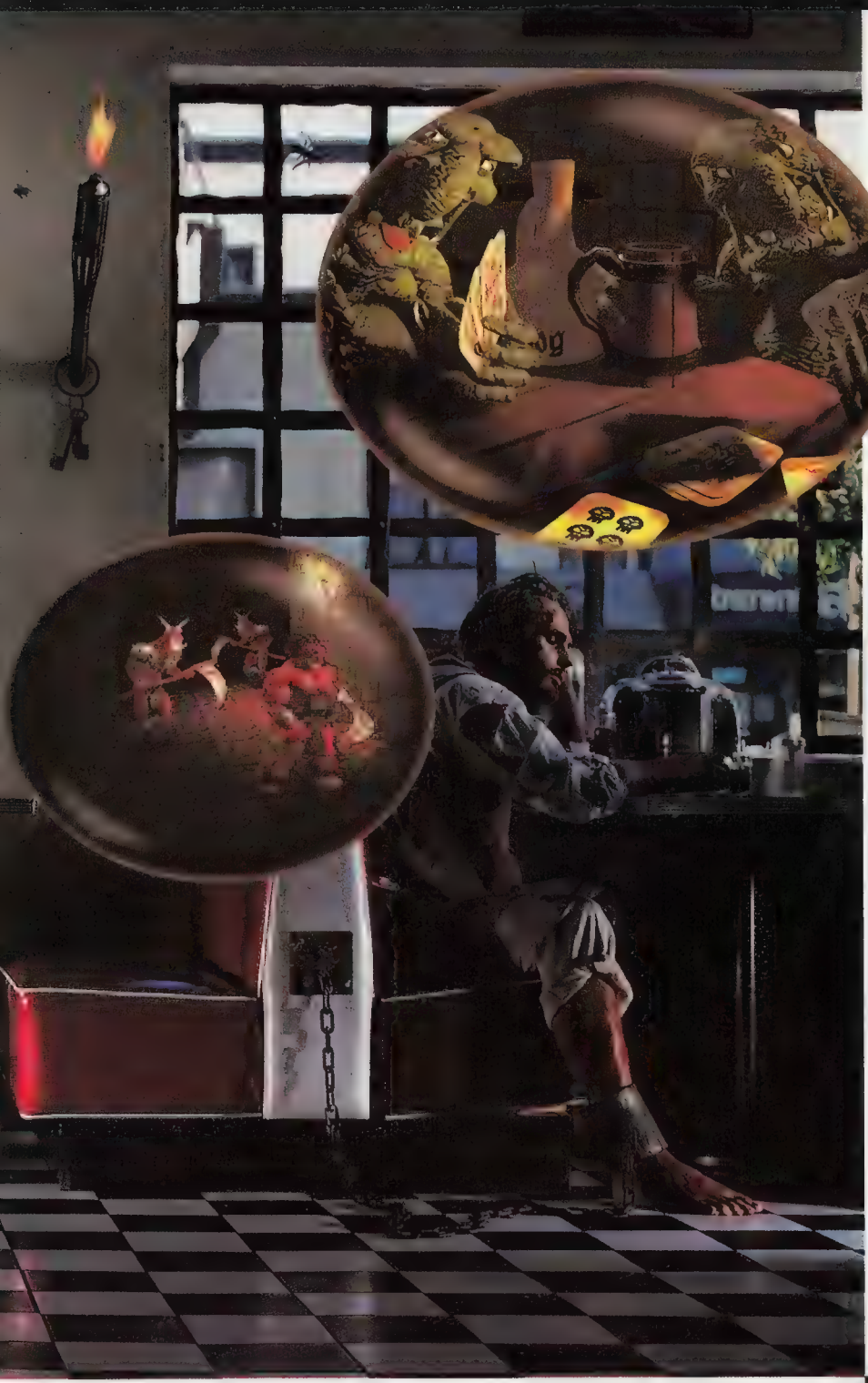


What's next?

Here's a switch. An RPG where you play the monsters (plenty of 'em). The fair-haired, blue-eyed heroes try to steal your treasure. You manage the dungeon (first or third person point of view) and hunt them down. Then maul them. It's even 8-player networkable. Happy feasting.

DUNGEON KEEPER

YOU'RE THE MONSTER

PC-CD

(for screenshots (demo) http://www.ea.com/bullfrog.htm)

Reader Service No. 44

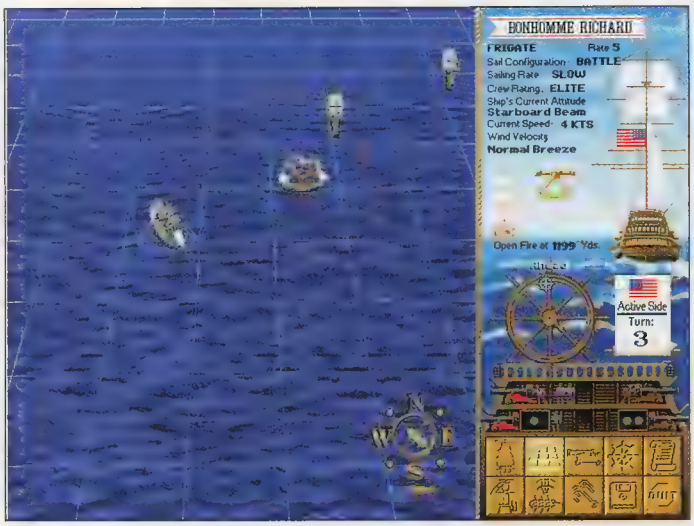
Wooden Ships and Iron Men

Stanley Associate's **Wooden Ships and Iron Men** is drawing nearer to completion, and we thought you might like to see how it's shaping up. **WS&IM** will be published by *Avalon Hill*, of course; the game itself is a fairly direct port of *AH*'s board game of the same name. **WS&IM** is a wargame covering naval warfare from 1776 through 1814.

The version of **WS&IM** that we played didn't have any scenarios included, and at first the prospect of having to create one just to get started was rather daunting. However, we quickly discovered that the included scenario editor is a breeze to use. This is in part good design, and in part a factor of the subject modeled. Since there is no terrain to worry over, it's just a matter of setting up the wind and placing forces. Each ship has a cost which makes it easy to ensure that both sides are more or less equal. At the time of this writing, the size of the ships modeled runs from a sloop with six guns up through a ship-of-the-line with over 100.

The mechanics of **WS&IM** are very simple. At its most basic a player has only to set a course, then sit back to watch. His crew(s) will handle the rest. However, you'll probably want to take control over what to load the guns with (round, double, chain, or grape shot) and how much canvas to hoist (battle, plain, or full sails). Beyond that, you can choose whether to aim at the hull or rigging of your target, set the maximum range you'll fire at (within the limits of your weaponry, of course), and distribute your crew between manning the guns, sending them aloft, or working on repairs.

Gameplay is turn based, using simultaneous movement (just like the board game). Players first plot the movement of their ships. The maneuverability of your ship – influenced by design, the skill of your crew (crews are rated from poor through elite) and the number of men assigned to the rigging – will determine how often you can change course. Note that you *must* use up all of your movement allowance. You see (this for the benefit of you landlubbers out there!) in any given amount of time (that is, in a turn) a ship will have to move a certain distance. These beauties didn't have brakes (though you can back the sails to slow down some). Once you've finished plotting the movement of a ship, it returns to where it began. After you've plotted movement for all your vessels, and adjusted all the settings mentioned above (type of shot, etc.), you run the turn.



Here's the plotting phase from the isometric perspective. The American ships are circling their prey, attempting to engage in raking fire

You have the choice of watching the action from an isometric perspective, or from directly overhead. As is so often the case, the isometric view is prettier, but the overhead view is probably more functional. All ships will follow their predetermined paths, and when in range, will fire broadsides at one another. The fire routines are automatic. If two ships collide, there is a good chance they'll become fouled and stop movement. You can also order a ship to attempt to grapple another. In either of these cases, during the next move you can assign part of the crew to a boarding party in an effort to capture the enemy vessel.

During the plotting phase you can check the status of your ships and see what damage they've taken. Damage is distributed between the rigging, the guns, the hull, and of course, the crew. Damage has an immediate and very real effect on the functioning of a vessel. Rigging damage slows the ship, destroyed guns weaken future broadsides, and of course you know what happens when the hull starts looking like Swiss cheese.

This is the status screen showing the various parts of the ship. Note the icons for rigging, guns and hull. The Bonhomme Richard is still in perfect condition

The strengths of **Wooden Ships and Iron Men** will be in modeling major naval battles. In smaller skirmishes, you might yearn for the chance to micromanage some of what is happening. Without the interaction of record keeping and rolling the dice, just watching the combat happen leaves one feeling curiously left out (this is not to say that smaller actions aren't still challenging, though). On the other hand, playing the Trafalgar scenario in the board game was an epic undertaking, while in the computer version it should provide a stimulating challenge. *Stanley Associates* was tempted to include some sort of "from the quarter-deck" options to give the game a more personal feel. It is the opinion of this writer that, had they done so, they would've lost the focus of the product.

And **Wooden Ships and Iron Men** *is* a focused product. It explores naval tactics in their most pure form. There are no arcade aspects of aiming the guns (thank goodness!) and boarding parties are handled automatically. No little sprites hacking at each other with their cutlasses! Basically, the game becomes a battle of wits between the commander of each side – a contest of maneuver (and there are both e-mail and hotseat two-player options). Generally speaking, he who puts his ships in the best position to do damage to the enemy, without taking damage in return, wins. But no fighting sail commander worth his salt will disregard the element of sailor's luck that comes from the sea. Give me a good ship, a loyal crew, and a star to steer by...take me back to the age of fighting sail!

Peter Smith

The scenario designer is easy to use. Here we're pitting the British frigates Flora and Seraphis (80 guns total) against the French ship-of-the-line Ville de Paris (104 guns). The British player is up against some heavy odds. Note that if this were a real scenario, we'd start the ships further apart!

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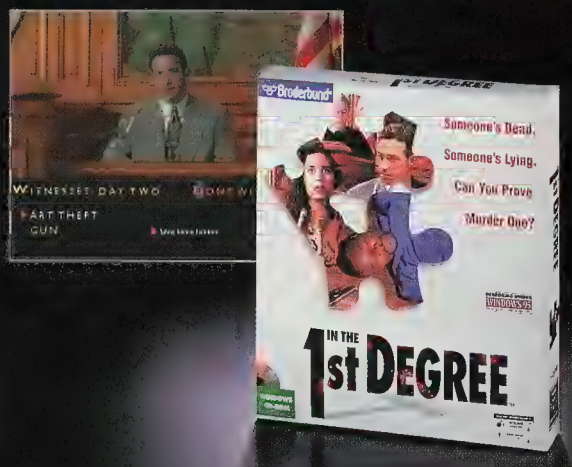

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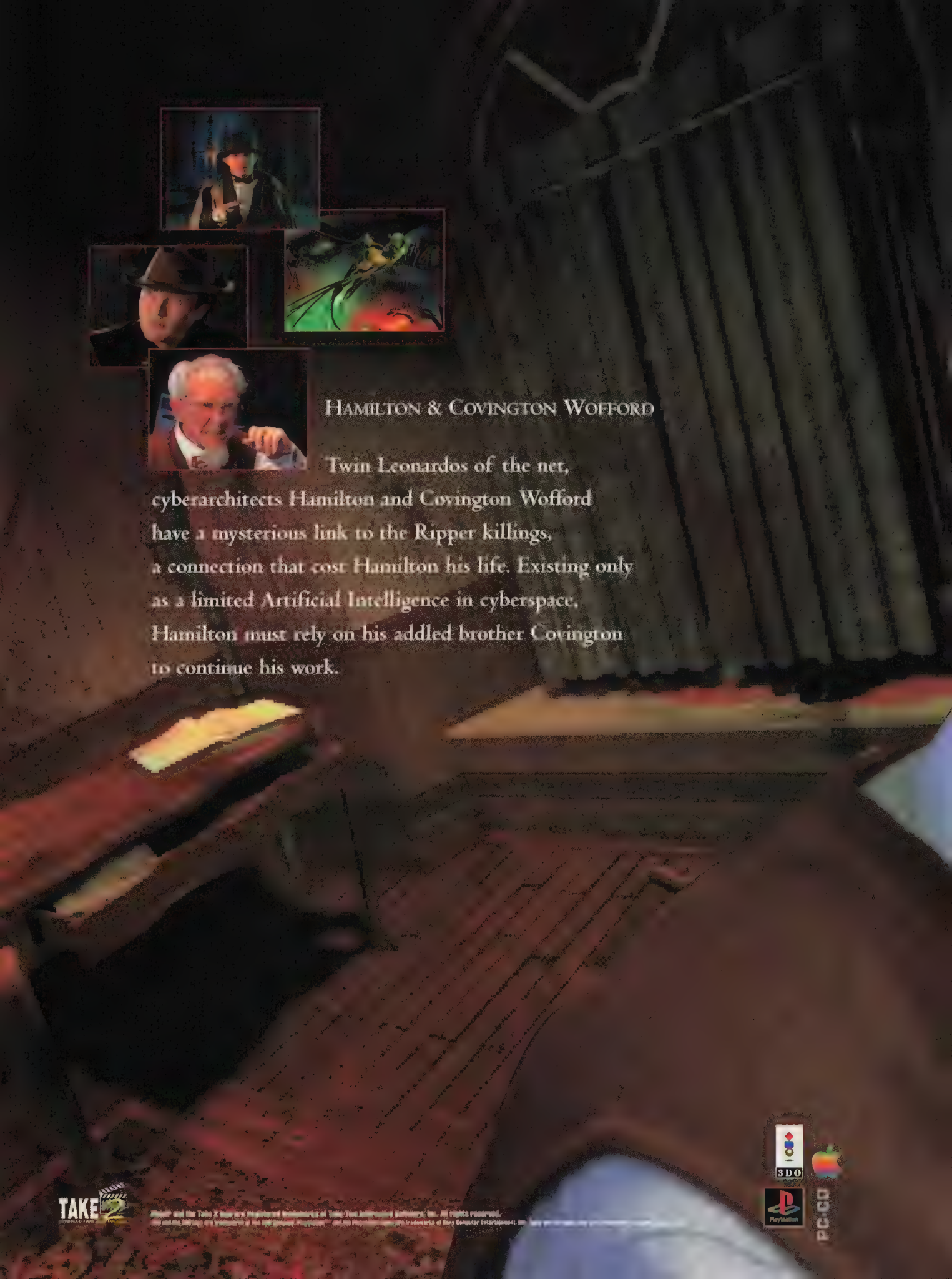
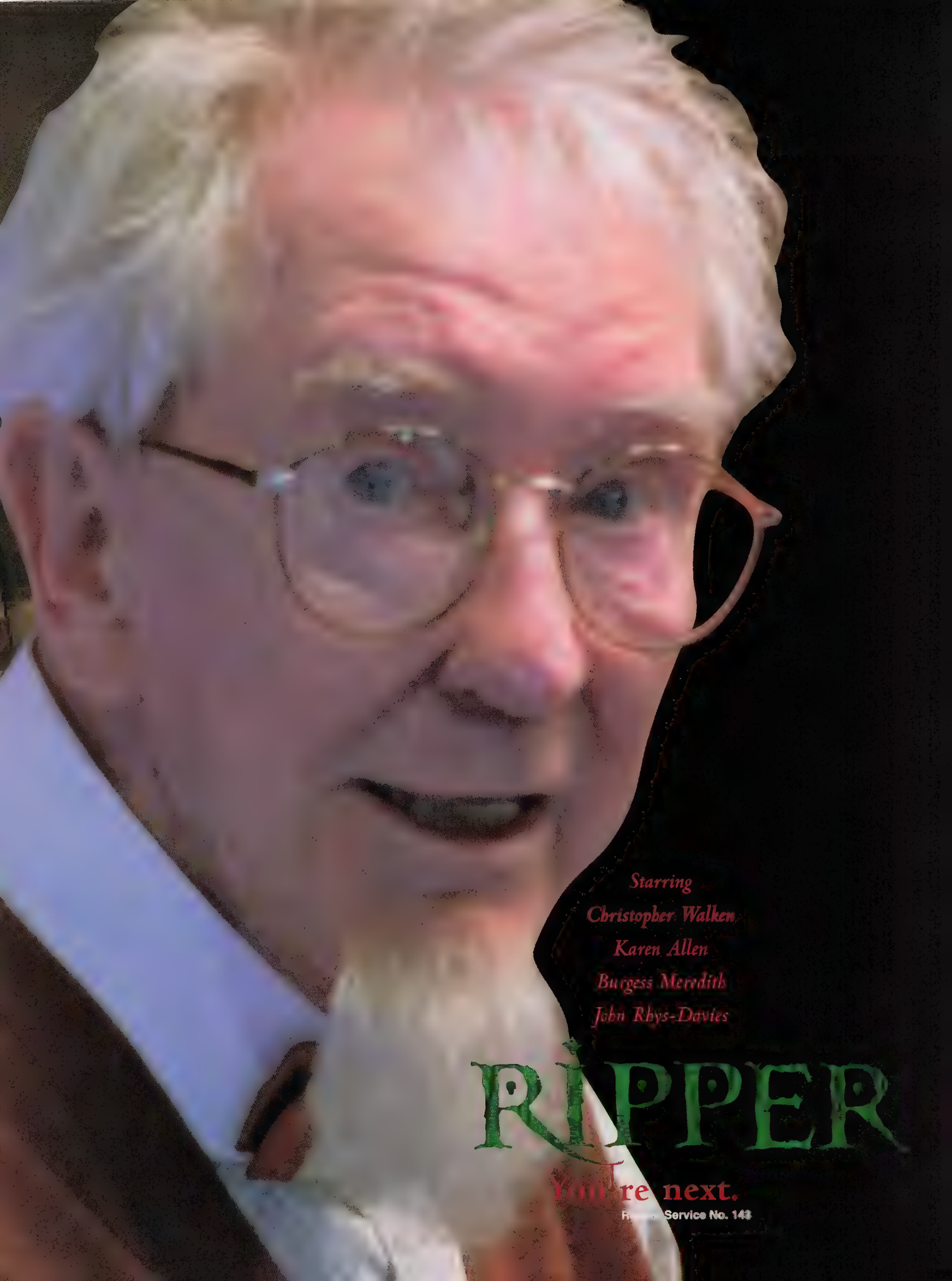
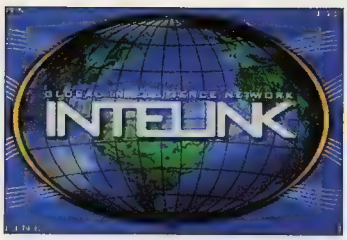
Reader Service No. 24


HAMILTON & COVINGTON WOFFORD
Twin Leonardos of the net, cyberarchitects Hamilton and Covington Wofford have a mysterious link to the Ripper killings, a connection that cost Hamilton his life. Existing only as a limited Artificial Intelligence in cyberspace, Hamilton must rely on his addled brother Covington to continue his work.


Starring
Christopher Walken
Karen Allen
Burgess Meredith
John Rhys-Davies
RIPPER
You're next.
Service No. 143

Spycraft

For spies who don't like their martinis shaken or stirred



What kind of game would you get if you consulted with a former major general of the KGB and the former director of the CIA?

Gamers will find out early in 1996 when *Activision* releases **Spycraft: The Great Game**, an interactive espionage thriller that promises not be a fantasy a la James Bond – this is supposed to be like the real thing.

The consultants in question are Oleg Kalugin and William Colby, and the script for the game is being handled by news correspondent, author, and specialist in international intelligence and terrorism James Adams. The actual CIA has even been interested in the design, since they have to be sure that no secrets are being given out.

The game puts the player in the role of a CIA operative in the post-Cold War near-present. It's 1996, and Russia is on the eve of an election (which will actually occur). A leading candidate is murdered, and it's rumored that the President of United States is also in danger. The player will have to untangle a web of deceit and betrayal to find out who's responsible, making moral choices and facing the consequences, both personal and global. Along the way the player will be forced to use official CIA tools and techniques to solve various puzzles and situations.

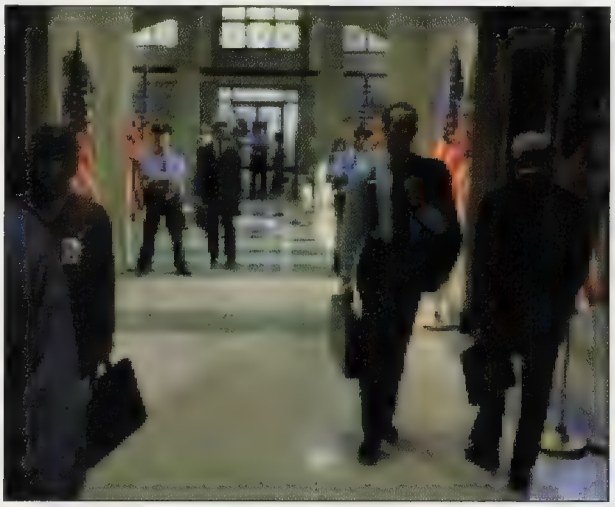
Visually, **Spycraft** blends 35mm film, digital video footage (over 80 sequences), still photography (over 400) and stock footage from the CIA to give the player a sense of realism. The game is first-person (but not some weird **SpyDOOM**) and spans a number of major cities, including New York, London, Tunis, Heidelberg and Moscow. They are combining a number of film techniques to embellish the scenes, such as matte paintings, and the sound effects will be handled by *Soundelux Media Labs*, who did the superb effects in **Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure**.

One location that was particularly difficult to recreate was Russia's Red Square, mostly due to the fact that Russia doesn't allow aerial photographs of it. In order to recreate it, the artists researched it and developed architectural drawings. They then built the location on the computer. All of this for one of the big scenes of the game, where the President of Russia addresses 200,000 people.

Though the game is fictional, they are attempting to bring in as many facts as possible. News will occur throughout the game that will allow the player to feel like they are taking part in actual events that are having an effect throughout the world. To even further that illusion, the program uses a pseudo-World Wide Web interface for retrieving data. Further blurring the line between fact and fiction, *Activision* are going to try and implement the *real* Web in the design, either by setting up sites that have information for the player (but isn't required), or by actually allowing the player to connect to the Web from the game.

Based on premise alone, **Spycraft** has enormous potential. Combining the knowledge of two spies the caliber of Colby and Kalugin is quite a coup for *Activision*, and having a true political insider handling the actual script is equally important. Everything is in place to make a truly unique and interesting... well, I suppose the real question is what sort of *game* will come out of it. A novel or movie would be relatively easy (and Tom Clancy has this market sewed up), but a game is a lot trickier. Is it going to be interactive enough? Is it going to be so realistic that it will actually be boring? Will **Spycraft** have the gameplay to back up it's **The Great Game** subtitle? We hope to do some more digging into this title next month, so stay tuned.

Steve Bauman



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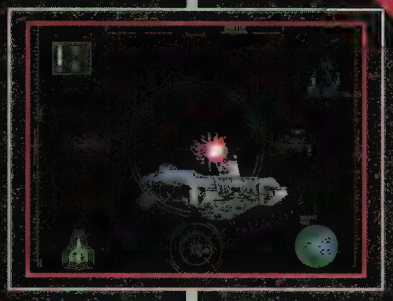
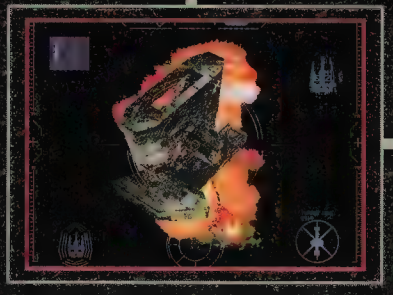


DOLBY SURROUND™



Actual screens may vary. Made in U.S.A.

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Reader Service No. 105

A lot of people died
playing the game.

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FORMER DIRECTOR

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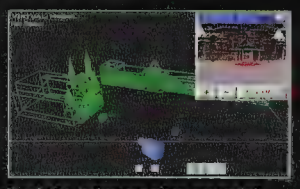
Unsurpassed film production enriches hours of realistic spycraft in a chilling world of intrigue.

Gather intelligence online by linking to real websites and accessing up-to-the-minute information.



Track the trajectory of an assassin's bullet, surveil double agents and intercept radio transmissions.

The "Great Game" of espionage. Few dare play...and even fewer finish. A game that spymasters William Colby (former Director of the CIA) and Oleg Kalugin (former Major General of the KGB) survived. Now, join these long-time adversaries in the most authentic spy thriller ever — Spycraft: The Great Game.

As a CIA operative, you challenge a conspiracy that could topple the fragile peace of the New World Order. Infiltrate a web of rogue spies. Outwit double agents. And make decisions that could mean life or death. In this game, there are no rules.

COMING IN FROM THE COLD FEBRUARY 1996.
AVAILABLE ON WINDOWS® 95 CD-ROM.

SPYCRAFT™
THE GREAT GAME

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ACTIVISION®

Reader Service No. 105

Curse of Dragor

Xorinth and its castle lie ruined. Dragor the evil sorcerer, half-brother of King Meridian, has defeated the king and his protecting Hexaemeron council through treachery. The defeat wasn't total however. The council members using their magical gifts transported Xorinth's population to neighboring lands, and transformed themselves into secret objects.

All the familiar stats of an RPG are here

Dragor populated Xorinth with things of darkness and then, bored with his hollow victory, abandoned it. The castle, a millennia later, now waits for someone to discover its secrets and restore the kingdom to its former glory. King Meridian, although banished to an astral plane is still able to guide worthy adventurers toward this goal.

So begins the **Curse of Dragor**, *Domark's* forthcoming RPG entry into the Macintosh gaming market. **Dragor,** according to *Domark*, is designed to be a RPG with a wide appeal. Not a hard-core RPG, it hopes to attract gamers through its fun and fast gameplay. Most interestingly, *Domark* plans on releasing game editors in the tradition of **Doom** and **Marathon** to allow players free reign in creating their own nightmare levels and challenges. This is an exciting prospect, guaranteed to keep interest in the game high, long after its initial release.

Dragor is a "step-n-stop" dungeon crawl similar to **Dungeon Master** and **Eye of the Beholder**. Players advance through the castle one step at a time and can turn in 90 degree segments. In this manner, the party will encounter puzzles and a variety of monsters including giant spiders, mummies, skeletons, and dark knights. Active on-screen objects, when clicked, will bring up menus that allow a variety of familiar actions such as take, look, and open.

In **Dragor** players will control a party of four characters. These characters may be assigned classes of cleric, wizard, alchemist, warrior, thief, or scholar. The scholar is unique with providing a competent mix of fighter and magic user skills. Unlike other games in this genre, players only have control of one active character at a time. Players assign a character to the lead position. From there, that particular character does the fighting and dying.

This method of fighting is accomplished easier than it may seem. It's simple to rotate players in and out of the lead position with a process that only takes a couple of mouse clicks. The real-time combat pauses as this change occurs. Control is easy with commands being entered through simple keyboard strokes and on-screen toggles. Almost all of the most important game functions can be controlled on screen with the mouse.

The graphics are rendered in attractive 640x480 high resolution. The 3-D combat comes across convincingly with pyrotechnic spells that fly from your character's hand, slashing swords, and thrown daggers that travel airborne down hallways. There are a wide range of corridor designs which help keep travelling from becoming repetitious. The game is also populated with many objects including tables, chairs, shelves, fireplaces, jars, and even a bog (toilet). The character portraits are appealing with humans as well as more exotic lizardmen, felines, gopher-types, and halflings.

Domark promises **Dragor** to be big and worthy of a CD game. The game will include a cinematic, rendered introduction. There will be more than 5000 locations to explore in the game and over 500 active objects to examine. To round this out will be a large weapons inventory, lengthy spell lists and automapping. The sound effects are convincing and each particular action is rewarded with a corresponding audio effect. There is haunting music for the title screens and *Domark* is planning on adding equally compelling music for the in-game action.

Fortunately, **Dragor** will be available for most Macintosh owners, supporting a wide range of machines. The game will run on computers with faster 68030 chips, 68040 machines, and offered in native-code for Power Macintoshes. An early beta of the game ran quickly on a a midrange 040 unit. Mac owners still making due with four megs of RAM should consider that it's time to upgrade. **Dragor** as with most recent releases will require at least eight megs of RAM.

The number of RPG titles available for the Macintosh has always been a little bare with *New World Computing* and *SSI* being the primary commercial suppliers for Mac enthusiasts. Now with *Domark* releasing **Curse of Dragor** this will hopefully signal the beginning of a larger trend in the revitalized Macintosh gaming market.

Chuck Klimushyn

This guy's trying to get ahead...

Master of Antares

An aura of mystery surrounds *Microprose*'s **Master of Antares** game. We know that Steve Barcia's *Simtex* development team (who of course created **Master of Orion** and **Master of Magic**, as well as **1830** for *Avalon Hill* and the currently vaporware **MetalLords: The Inner Circle** for *New World Computing*) is at work on it, and *MicroProse*'s website has some info, but the company itself is just not talking. The following is a hodgepodge of speculation, rumor, and a tiny morsel of fact. Please take it in the spirit in which it is intended... from one bunch of curious gamers to another.

Master of Orion and **Master of Magic** were both successful games, and we don't expect *Simtex* to wander too far away from those designs. In fact, we've heard **Master of Antares** described as a melding of the two games. **Master of Antares** takes you back into space, and again you'll be colonizing planets and fighting interstellar wars. In these ways, it is like **Master of Orion**. **Master of Antares** will contain 13 different races, and you can customize them (something players of the shareware game **Stars!** seem to be quite fond of). In order to cut down on micromanagement, you'll be able to hire heroes to run your colonies or pilot your ships (Buck Rogers, anyone?).

Once again, resource management will play a key role in the game. A colony will produce food, industrial output, and research. Keeping the populace happy will be a key consideration, and we imagine you'll want to build some sort of defensive installations, as well. Researching new technologies will be a major goal, but will require balancing the tax load on your populace with your current need for new toys.

Of course, **Master of Antares** will have the obligatory space battles. Each player will create ships (over 30 to choose from) with various different weapons and slug it out. Boarding an enemy ship will be possible. No word on whether you can capture it for your own use, though we think that would be very cool. At the very least, we ought to be able to steal ship technologies in this fashion. Let's hope Barcia is reading this.

When you're not feeling hostile, you can turn to diplomacy. It will be possible to trade with other civilizations, or even set up treaties with them. You can try to intimidate them in order to get what you want out of them. On the other hand, if you're feeling inadequate, paying tribute may be the wisest decision.

One thing that is certain about **Master of Antares** is that *Simtex* has embraced SVGA graphics. Prior **Master of** games had visuals that were merely functional; however, the **Master of Antares** screens we've seen are quite lovely.

OK, we've saved the best for last: multi-player support. Up to eight people can play via network or hot-seat (according to plans so far as we know them), or you and a friend can go head to head over the modem. Right there, they've sold us. We'd buy a straight multi-player port of **Master of Orion**. Let's just hope it makes it (and functionally) into the final product; fortunately, *MicroProse* has generally been pretty good about getting modem play working in their releases.

We have a lot of faith in *Simtex*, and they're basically working with a proven formula. We'll bring you some more *facts* about **Master of Antares** as soon as we can pry them out of *MicroProse* (this process being somewhat akin to opening oysters with a rubber spatula). In the meantime, if you hear any rumors about the game, well, we showed you ours, so...

Peter Smith

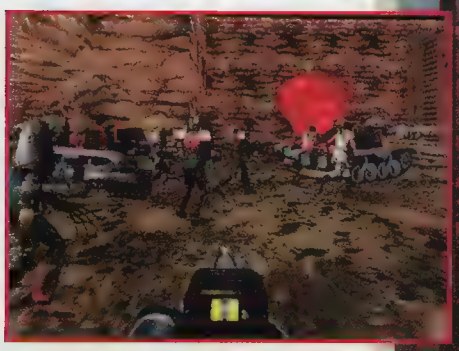
Space combat returns to the Master of series!

The new SVGA graphics are very much appreciated, Simtex!!!

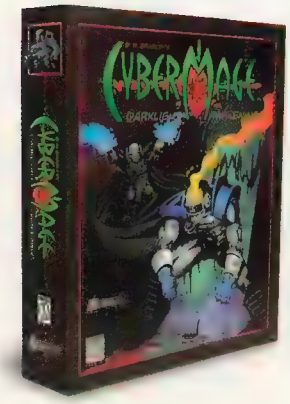
Any game that includes Advanced Fusion Beams can't be all bad

I wouldn't mind establishing diplomatic ties with her! (Sexist pig that I am.)

"Better than *Underworld*® *II*.



...way, way better



If you think you've experienced everything that first-person games have to offer, you haven't tried *CyberMage: Darklight Awakening*. It's like stepping off the pages of a cyberpunk comic into a fantastic, 3-D world.

CyberMage combines unparalleled visual realism in both VGA and SVGA with more weapons, more super-powers, and more places to explore than any other first-person game.

In the thrilling *CyberMage* story, you are a novice superhero, the possessor of an alien Darklight Gem implant, trying to master your newfound powers and discover the secrets of your origin while on the run from your nemesis, the evil Darklight adept NeCrom.

Better than *System Shock*™...

Actual SVGA gameplay screen shots used.

than *Doom*™."

— Strategy Plus Magazine

You'll have to know friends from foes as you fight your way through labs, cities, battlefields, caves and mystical temples. Each new scene is like a whole new world.

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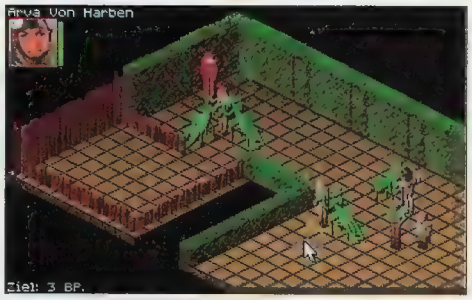
Reader Service No. 105

Shadows Over Riva

Both computer games and paper-and-pencil role-playing games started building their respective audiences in the late 70's and early 80's, and often the players were the same people in both areas. As such, it's no surprise that the computer RPG is one of the most popular genres in the field.

But with so many inexperienced players getting multimedia PC's these days, many game designers have chosen to abandon the hard-core statistics and die-rolling that make up so much of the RPG experience. Germany's *Attic Entertainment* is determined to stick to their guns with the popular **Realms of Arkania** series, however. The third and final game of the Northlands trilogy, **Shadows Over Riva**, will be available in the first quarter of 1996 from those wacky folks at *Sir-tech*.

Although **Shadows Over Riva** is a "hard-core" gaming experience, that doesn't mean it will be inaccessible to newcomers to Arkania (or RPG's in general, for that matter). There are two modes of play: one for the novice, which will keep the rolls and abstract information hidden, and another mode for the experienced gamer, showing all the stats. Players can shift between these difficulty levels at any point during play.

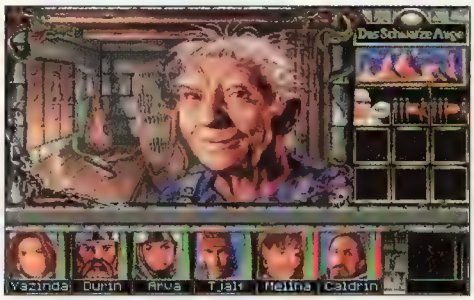


Perhaps the reason the folks at *Attic* are so determined to keep their games as true to the genre's roots as possible is that **Realms of Arkania** started its life as a paper-and-pencil game. The success of that incarnation led to the first computer game, **Blade of Destiny**, another strong success. The next game, **Star Trail**, took advantage of burgeoning CD-ROM technology, with a better dialogue system, cinematic sequences and digitized speech. **Shadows Over Riva** will take the technology a significant step forward once again.

The game begins where **Star Trail** left off, with the elves and dwarves reunited by the mystical power of the Salamander Stone. But this new union may not be enough to stave off the bloodthirsty Orcs. What has caused them to be so vicious and powerful? The answer lies somewhere in the unsettled town of Riva, and it is up to the player to discover it.

Star Trail is a wide-ranging and epic adventure, requiring the player to travel over hundreds of miles of terrain to complete the quest. This is one of the least popular aspects of an otherwise almost universally acclaimed game, so **Shadows Over Riva** is a study in contrast. The entire adventure takes place in the title city, its taverns and sewers, its slums and mansions. In Riva's dank streets, the player will discover a race called the Holberks, half elf and half Orc, who are rumored to be the catalyst in the Orcish wars.

There are over 150 NPCs (non-player characters, controlled by the computer), and the dialogue system has become considerably more flexible since **Star Trail**. A player can ask the same question in a polite or a belligerent style, getting a different reaction from each. The characters will also recognize the player's party if they meet for a second time, and will react accordingly, pulling them deeper into the action. There are also eight NPCs the player can choose to include in the party, thus allowing for a more unpredictable and interactive experience. To further enhance this interaction, there will be lots of digitized speech, recorded by professional voice actors. Of course, that's more or less a standard package these days, but a full orchestral CD audio soundtrack complete with leitmotifs and situational variations is still something of a novelty, and that's what **Shadows Over Riva** has to offer.



While staying true to the world established in the earlier **Arkania** games, *Attic* has also added new elements to almost every aspect of **Shadows Over Riva**. There are new spells, new monsters and new magic items to keep even the experienced Arkania traveler guessing. The play screens now include an improved 3D first-person perspective for dungeons and the town. **Shadows** also includes some impressive cinematic sequences, which can be viewed in either VGA or SVGA, depending on your system's capabilities.

In fact, if you have a party that worked particularly well in **Blade of Destiny** and/or **Star Trail**, you will be able to import them to **Riva**, where they will be updated for the game at hand. This is an aspect of paper-and-pencil games that is almost universally ignored in computer RPGs, but it's a hallmark of **Realms of Arkania**, and will continue to be implemented well past the Northlands trilogy. And have no fear, the **Realms of Arkania** games will continue long after the end of Northlands.

John Voorhees

Citizens of Planet Earth:
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Minimum Requirements: O/S - DOS 5.0, Ram - 4MB, Video - VGA, CD-ROM - 2x, Hard Disk - 5MB, Sound - Sound Blaster & MIDI, Input - Mouse
Reader Service No. 68

Whiplash

Take a turn for the better in Interplay's slick racing game

Since the success of **Ridge Racer** and **Daytona USA** in the arcade (OK, so trace the lineage to **Monaco GP**, **Pole Position** and **Virtua Racing**) racing has become all the rage on both the consoles and the PC. We've seen recent games like *Electronic Arts'* **Need for Speed** and *Virgin's* **Screamer** laying down rubber across your hard drive, while those who are more serious are still driving around in circles with *Papyrus's* amazing **NASCAR** and **IndyCar** simulations. Excluding the "real" racing simulations, many of these games appear similar, but discerning racers tend to notice that they have enough differences to make them worth owning.

It seems that every publisher is rushing a race game out for the coming holiday seasons, and *Interplay* is no exception. Their entry, **Whiplash**, is, even in beta form (sorry, it won't make it for Christmas), the most purely entertaining arcade racing game I've yet seen on the PC. It's no **NASCAR** when it comes to modeling – they have *way* too much grip and don't slip and slide as much as in **Ridge Racer** – but who cares? This game has something none of the current arcade bunch has – stunts! Yes folks, that's right. You can fly through the air with the greatest of ease as you leap over chasms, get air over bumps in the road, drive through loops and corkscrews, and generally do things in these cars that only rally drivers get to experience in real life (well, they don't go through loops and corkscrews, but they do get to jump a lot – in the car, that is). No mean feat, since most racing games stay in one horizontal plane.

One thing this game has that none of the other competitors have is a car that takes damage progressively. As you run into things, the car's performance starts to degrade. As it keeps getting worse, smoke starts pouring out from under the hood, until eventually the car explodes. As you take damage, you can stop in the pits to fix up the old clunker. After a few seconds in the pits, it's as good as new (see, aren't arcade games great?! – from near explosion to nearly new in a matter of seconds).

In typical fashion, the game features multiple camera views for checking out your car, and, in typical fashion, most of the views are useless while you're actually playing the game. Some people seem to prefer driving with an external view of your car, but I've always thought that defeated the purpose of doing 3D graphics – you lose whatever sense of immersion has been achieved when you step outside to look at your own car. The regular 3D view features no dashboard – only road, and the illusion of speed – because you're so close to the road – is superb. You can play the game in VGA or SVGA mode, but the SVGA doesn't add enough detail to make it worth the performance hit. Once in motion, the graphics are superb.

Stealing a page from the arcade book, developer *Gremlin* has seen fit to include network and modem play. Over a network, up to 16 players can race against one another (let's see those fancy consoles do that, or even a fancy arcade game!) in a free-for-all. As usual, network play makes the game better (and you do have a network at home, don't you?), but solo mode will still be quite enough for most players.

Despite my usual tactic of trying not to hype a game too much before it's done, I'll go out on a limb and say **Whiplash** rules the known world. Well, that may be overstating things just a bit, but seriously, this is one seriously entertaining game. Unless the thing falls apart on its way to final release, it could be the king of arcade race games. For now.

Steve Bauman

DO UNTO others AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU. IN THIS CASE, RIP OUT THEIR SPINE AND internal organs.

It is the most intense fighting tournament in the universe. It is now available on the PC. It is an exact replica of the infamous arcade hit. It has special PC encryption "kodes" that unlock debilitating powers. It has digitized sound and music identical to the coin-op's. It has abilities, which means you can go head-to-head network play or foot-to-face with your ill-fated friends. It is not going to be pretty.

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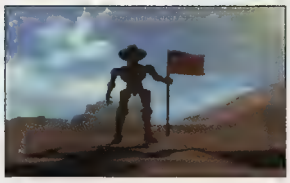
Williams MIDWAY.

Real-time strategy for people with short attention... what were we talking about?

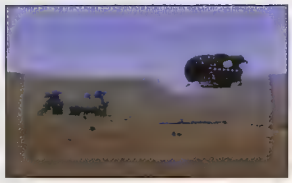
Like to blow things up? Like death and destruction, with large doses of bathroom humor? Like games like **Command & Conquer** or **Warcraft** but hate those long delays while you build your bases or replenish your troops? If you said YES then *Virgin* has the game of your bloody dreams, titled **Z** (abbreviated as **Z** from hereon). The name may be short, but that doesn't mean it's short on gameplay.

The game puts you in charge of squads of robots in battle as you try to defeat the other guy's robots (computer controlled or via modem/network connected fellow human). The game is laid out as a bunch of sectors; each one has a flag. The player who gets all of the flags first wins the game. To take a flag, all the player must do is send a troop there. Once you control a sector, you also control any buildings in that sector. For example, tanks may be built in one sector; if you take it over, you get to build tanks. However, when you start up production your opponent can take the flag and take over your production, leading you to the strategy of blowing up your own production facilities from time to time.



Ah, blowing things up. That's part of what makes **Z** so entertaining. You can blow everything up. Are there mountains in your way? No problem. Blow 'em up. Forests blocking your tank? Blow 'em up. Is the enemy getting you down? Blow 'em up. The explosions not only have that good patented explosion sound, but the debris shoots toward the monitor in a cool psuedo-3D effect. When you have troops running around all over the screen blowing each other up, the game turns into total chaos.

Your robots are a bunch of oil-swilling, rabble-rousing, metal-skirt chasing louts led by General Zod. They star in the cut scenes serve as your reward for completing missions, and they are actually quite entertaining, with the English designers doing a remarkably good job at emulating stereotypical American dialogue ("We watch a lot of American TV," explained the designer, Eric Matthews, of *The Bitmap Brothers*).



The interface is a slick point-and-click affair, which makes handling your troops a breeze. Select the troops and tell them where to go. If they're going to see an enemy, they'll attack. If it's a building, they'll blow it up. If it's a flag, they'll take it.

One of the things the *Bitmaps* pride themselves on is their AI. They're spending a lot of time making sure your troops don't act stupid and that the computer is a challenging opponent. Your troops will defend intelligently if they're being attacked, and will run away if outmanned. They will start to yell at you if they're getting slaughtered.

Matthews talked about how many games are using multi-player mode as an excuse to do shoddy AI, which results in games where you (or reviewers) say, "It's not good against the computer, but when you're playing another human over a network, lemme tell ya..." He thinks that's a cop-out, and we're inclined to agree, since you probably don't have a network at home or access to another human with a modem at a moment's notice.

Since **Command & Conquer** has proven to be one of the most popular games on the planet, it will be interesting to see how **Z** compares. Though the *Bitmap Brothers* downplay the similarities between the two, **Z** is more of an action game than *Westwood*'s frantic smash. If you have an urge for explosions, a craving for carnage, or a desire for devastation, **Z** might be the game for you.

Steve Bauman

The Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall

Many fantasy role-playing games for the computer are structurally based, to at least some degree, on *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons*, the infamous *AD&D* that sends concerned parents and fundamentalists into a righteous tizzy. The player constructs characters based on randomized statistics, forms a party and charges into dark, evil surroundings, looking for monsters to kill and loot to plunder. Sure, there's usually a nearby town, and non-player characters to talk to, but that's all window dressing, right? The real show is down in the dungeon, right?

At least with the computer game versions.

Well, *Bethesda Softworks* has already challenged these assumptions with the first chapter of **The Elder Scrolls: Arena**. The player's flexibility of play increased dramatically, and much more attention was paid to character interaction than to combat: in short, actual role-playing was involved! But if you thought that was

impressive, you'd better brace yourself for the sequel, **Daggerfall**. Instead of following the *D&D* model, this game adheres closely to the infinitely more flexible GURPS system.

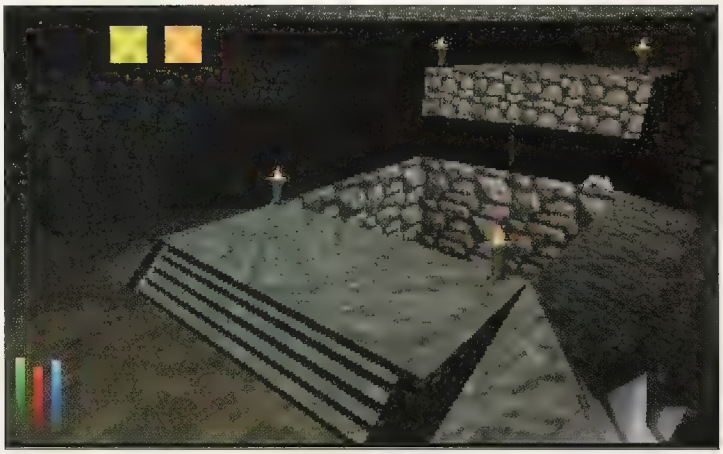
Even starting with the character construction system, **Daggerfall** breaks away from the pack. Instead of rolling virtual dice to generate scores, the player essentially has a "conversation" with the program about what sort of character is desirable, and, bang, there he or she is. This system also allows the player to take on GURPS-style disadvantages, ranging from paranoia to intensely unpleasant body odor to loss of a limb, for enhanced statistics. This can make for a much better-rounded character, and in this game, such subtleties can actually make for a noticeable difference in gameplay. Even such an apparently throw-away detail as character clothing can actually affect the game.

Character interactions can have tremendous variation and surprisingly subtle consequences. If you generally behave well toward the people around you (like your hirelings, for example), the word will get around and you will gain a positive reputation that will precede you and help your dealings with other people. By the same token, if you behave like a fool, it could seriously turn folks off and make it harder to negotiate.

Incidentally, negotiation isn't just for the tavern anymore. Some humanoid dungeon-dwelling races, like orcs and goblins, are intelligent enough to hold a conversation. If, instead of hacking and slashing away when you first encounter these critters, you try talking with them, it could have positive effects on your dealings with that race for the rest of the game.

Even the conversation structure itself has been turned on its ear. While you can just go through the chat choosing sentence after sentence, you can also pick an ultimate objective for a conversation, and let the computer get you there.

The flexibility inherent in **Daggerfall** can be downright boggling. At the start of the game, the player is asked to undertake a special mission on behalf of the Emperor to quell a potential uprising in the royal court of Daggerfall. That's not so amazing.



The amazing thing is... you can say no! If you choose *not* to take this path, it doesn't end the game. You can find other paths to explore in this world instead (in fact, there's about 4000 adventuring locations in the game!). And if you do choose to investigate the court, it's ultimately up to you to choose which side to defend.

Have no fear, the visual side of **Daggerfall** lives up to all its many gameplay possibilities. The game features *Bethesda's* X(n)gine™, a powerful 3D engine which lets the player maneuver smoothly across the topographical landscape in VGA or SVGA, depending on the system's power. The extremely variable terrain includes caves, castles, dwellings, highlands, and lowlands, and even allows the player to travel underwater.

If you had a favorite character from your **Arena** game, you can import it into **Daggerfall** and continue your adventures. You can also use the SpellMaker utility for new magical power, although there's even more mystical potential in this new chapter. There are lots of new monsters, new spells, and an enormous landscape to explore. The themes of some of the quests and encounters may occasionally range into the "mature" range, so **Daggerfall** comes with the ChildGuard lockout feature, to ease the minds of those concerned parents I was talking about before.

Could this be the RPG to end all RPGs? Doubtful, because then *Bethesda* would have no reason to do another game!

John Voorhees

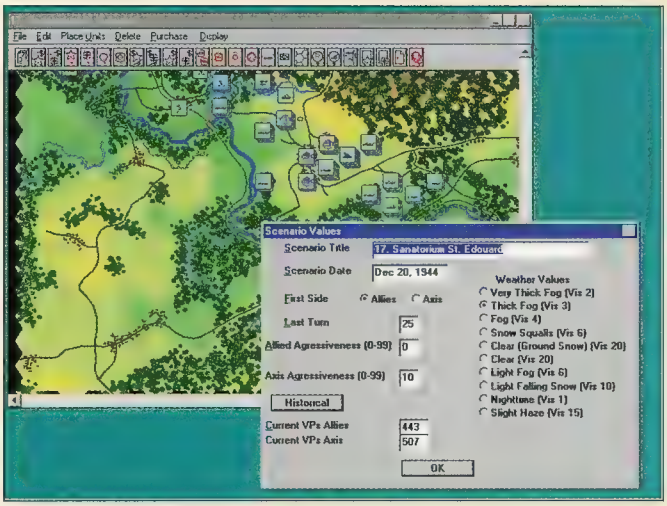
What should war games be teaching us?

I was driving to work this morning, groovin' on the stereo as usual. I was listening to an old *Blue Oyster Cult* album (from back when they *were* albums) and *Veteran Of the Psychic Wars* came on. Don't know if you've heard that one, but its a ballad about a soldier in a futuristic conflict. Whenever I hear that song, it stirs something in me. I really feel for the grunt singing it.

I find it curious that this song, about a fictional conflict, can stir emotions in me but I can't recall a single instance when a wargame has had the same effect. I mean, here we are exploring and simulating actions involving real life. People we knew fought in (some of) these wars we simulate. Our families were torn asunder by the losses involved. Real heroics were performed. Honest to God acts of sacrifice and bravery, as well as unspeakable acts of horror. But none of that comes through in the games we play.

I'm not sure if this is a failing of the media, or if it just reflects a lack of interest on the part of the designers, or even the gamers. But if wargames are meant to teach us about history, they should teach more than tactics and obscure hardware facts. They should convey to us the human cost of warfare. And they should show us the resilience and strength of the human spirit.

OK, end of brief sermon. Wake up and pay attention.



Battleground: Ardennes—Of course it has a scenario editor!

Great news for **Perfect General II** fans: *QQP* has released the **Perfect General II Scenario & Campaign Editor**. In addition to the scenario and campaign editor, the package also includes an upgrade for **Perfect General II** and ten new scenarios. The scenario editor is fairly easy to use; within minutes of installing, you'll be noodling around creating new maps and mini-scenarios. Mind you, buying **AutoCAD** doesn't make you a designer, and buying this product won't make you an expert at creating great scenarios without a lot of work and practice. But at least you'll have a solid set of tools to get started with, and you'll learn to appreciate all the hard work that goes into the scenarios you've been enjoying all these months.

Lazy people like me can use the editor to tweak existing scenarios to breathe new life into them. The campaign editor can link up to ten scenarios into a campaign for even more challenge. Just fill in the slots with scenarios, add a campaign goal, and voila! Even if you don't intend to buy the editor, the release is good news. No doubt we'll be seeing lots and lots of new scenarios and campaigns available for download from the on-line services!

Stray Bullets

Can't get enough of **Command & Conquer**? Well, while you're waiting for **C&C: Red Alert** to ship, check out the *Westwood* home page now and then (www.westwood.com). *Westwood* plans to put up a few new missions for **C&C** sometime in the near future.

By the time you read this, the folks at *The Logic Factory* should have released their **AI Antagonizer** for **Ascendancy**. This module is a response to the gamers who think that **Ascendancy**'s AI isn't tough enough. It will be available as a free download from the usual places. Kudos to *The Logic Factory* for being so responsive to their customers. For more information, point your web browser at www.logicfactory.com.

Bob McNamara has left *Avalon Hill* to join *Talonsoft*. McNamara designed many of the **Advanced Squad Leader** modules while at *AH*. His first task at *Talonsoft* will be to assist in the design of future WWII installments of the **Battleground** series. Pure speculation on my part, but it seems like a waste not to put his background to good use, doesn't it? By the way, the *Talonsoft* rumor mill is buzzing... seems like they'll be working on **Battleground: Waterloo** in the not too distant future. Oh, and I need to point out an error in a recent *On War* article. Mike Robel mentioned **Battleground: Ardennes** and its lack of a scenario editor. Mike was looking at an early copy; the final version does indeed have a very nice scenario editor included.

No sooner do I mention that Norm Koger has stopped work on his **Wargame Construction Set II: TANKS!** then he warms up his compiler and comes up with a new upgrade! Look for version 1.30 out on the nets.

The misty-eyed gamer

Well, 'tis a great season to be a gamer. As I write this, ghosts and goblins are pounding on my door yelling "trick or treat," but you're probably more concerned with raising cups of cheer and ringing in the New Year as you *read* this. Already the holiday season has provided an embarrassment of riches for the strategy and wargamer. The only downside is that we're bound to miss some great titles in the deluge. A few companies are getting savvy to that fear, and holding back titles for release until early in '96, when things quiet down a little. Smart move, from where I'm standing (is that a hole in my pocket or what?!).

Anyway, I hope you're treated well, or you treat yourself well (more likely, if your family is as techno-phobic as mine!) this holiday season. Plenty of great gaming available, that's for sure. Now, if someone could only figure out how to add ten hours to each day, so we'd have time to *play* all this stuff!

Peter Smith

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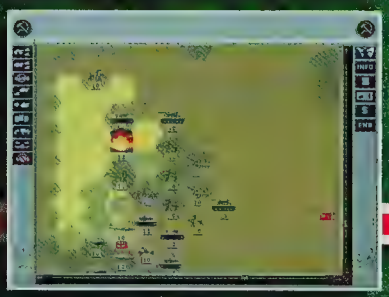

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Reader Service No. 4

The Perfect General II Scenario & Campaign Editor

Georgia Tech course covers the professional side of wargaming

Every summer for the past sixteen years, Georgia Tech has offered a continuing education course dealing with the professional side of wargaming and simulation. This year's course, entitled the "16th Annual Course on Modeling, Simulation, and Gaming of Warfare," covered a broad variety of topics, ranging from highly technical discussions of analytical modeling of warfare to a very informative presentation by James Dunnigan, one of the "old hands" of board wargaming and no stranger to the computer gaming field.

For years, most military wargaming consisted of huge efforts involving technical staff numbering in the hundreds, as well as months of preparation—only to play one exercise maybe once or twice. True, this is a gross simplification, and there were exceptions to this, but overall it gives you a pretty good idea of what existed (and still exists today in the form of "legacy" systems). Wargames were difficult to use, buggy, often not interesting (read: no fun), and arguably not very useful. While "simulator" technology grew throughout the Seventies, it remained expensive and, from an operational standpoint, limited in that pilots flew alone, often against a single enemy.

However, over the past five to ten years a revolution has been occurring in military simulation and wargaming, spurred on by the increasing costs of "normal" training, the explosion in computer technology, and the growing complexity of geopolitical situations. The goal is nothing less than a world wide network of interconnected simulations, wargames, and even real equipment, all capable of "playing" together on a "synthetic battlefield."

A company in tank simulators at Fort Knox *[such as the ones our writer Mike Robel has worked on – Ed.]* might go up against a battalion of enemy tanks, where the individual enemy tanks are controlled by computer "entities" but commanded by a human commander through wargaming software at the National Simulation Center at Fort Leavenworth. They might get air support from a "virtual prototype" of a new plane not yet out of the computer, and reinforcements from a company commanded by a National Guard Captain playing a wargame on his laptop at home.

That's the vision, but of course the reality is still a long way from getting to the vision yet. Ironically, many of the presenters made reference to the chief driver of the technology growth needed to reach the vision—no longer is it high-tech defense labs driving much of the technology, but the commercial world instead, with the entertainment industry at the forefront. One example of this recognition is an annual Air Force conference at Maxwell AFB, which brings together military and commercial wargame and simulation developers for an exchange of ideas.

While much of the Georgia Tech course covered topics primarily of interest to the military modeling and simulation ("M&S") community, two presentations might have been of particular interest to *Strategy Plus* readers. The first was James Dunnigan's, which covered a broad swath of topics from the design of wargames (Mr. Dunnigan has authored over one hundred historical simulations, was the founder of *Simulations Publications Inc.* (*SPI*), and may be best known to the computer wargame community for his on-line game, **Hundred Years War**) to the applications of commercial wargames for training and education and the future of wargaming. During the evening of the first day he gave demonstrations of several commercial games (both computer and board) to many who had never seen them; these included **Empire Deluxe**, **Harpoon II Multimedia**, and a quick look at a new game, **Empire II: The Art of War**. Attendees of the course also received a copy of his *book The Complete Wargames Handbook: How to Play, Design and Find Them* (Revised Edition, Quill Press, William Morrow & Co.).

A second presentation covered CAINES, a Windows-based simulation developed at the Air Force Academy for use in their Military Art & Science (MAS) 330 course, "Airpower Theory and Doctrine." CAINES is used as a capstone exercise, where students are to apply concepts learned during the course.

CAINES is remarkable for a military wargame in that it is simple to use (very accessible), speedy, and doesn't require months of effort and dozens of people to operate—the course instructor can use a scenario builder to design a situation, and students can play the simulation out (either head-to-head over a serial connection, or one against pre-scripted computer actions—there is no AI as such, yet). The simulation uses Defense Mapping Agency maps from laser disc or transferred to hard drive (these are beautiful maps, although currently they mostly act as a backdrop for the CAINES symbology—there is no consideration of terrain in the simulation).

Students may build a force structure to fit their chosen strategy by "buying" weapons, supplies, and intelligence capabilities (a feature commercial strategy gamers are quite used to) and deploying these functions. The students then plan the missions, defining attributes such as start time, time on target, mission type, waypoints, etc. Much of the work is done in a planning stage; once the students "declare war" they mostly watch their strategy develop against the opponent (again, either a pre-scripted set of computer moves or those of another student group). The students can make changes, scripting new missions as needed. The game operates in a "faster-than-real-time" mode (30 seconds real time = 15 minutes game time). Battle effects are taken into consideration; for example, the destruction of a POL (petroleum, oil, lubricant) site will reduce fuel available for the aircraft.

While the Georgia Tech course definitely isn't an event like ORIGINS or AVALONCON (at $850 a pop, it would take a dedicated wargamer to attend!), it is interesting to see how events like the course are beginning to break down the walls between military and hobby wargamers.

Scott Udell

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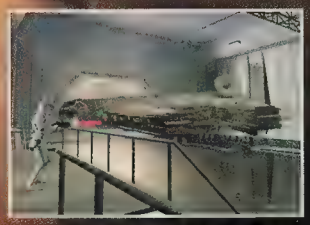

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Reader Service No. 81

Designed by Impressions/Omnitrendd
Published by Sierra
Platform PC CD-ROM

Breach 3

Small-unit tactical gaming's on the rise these days, particularly with fantasy-based designs. Whether it's the 'mech simulators, the **X-COM** success story, or even the influence of games like **Command and Conquer** pushing the wave, is uncertain. What's clear, though, is that the genre's become highly competitive, particularly in the area of techno-flash.

X-COM proved you don't need lots of chrome to be a smashing success, but that was awhile ago. Now **Breach 3** shows up, about a year too late, really, to be assessed as positively as it might have been in 1994.

There's nothing spectacularly wrong with **Breach 3**; in fact, it's a pretty good little tactical game. Its model of opportunity fire, in particular, is often more effective than that present in other recent competitive designs. The problem is that it's stuck between two audiences, without catering sufficiently to either one: it's neither the glitzy SVGA multimedia game it could've been with the necessary resources, nor the in-depth, finely-crafted and thoroughly revised sequel to the classic **Breach** and **Breach 2** fans of the latter two games have been waiting for interminably.

Along the same lines, the interface is neither intuitive enough to be quickly comprehensible to newcomers to the game's structure, nor sophisticated enough to give new players the kind of information and understanding necessary to manage the tactical situation in either turn-based or real-time modes.

One of the persistent limitations of the **Breach/Rules of Engagement** system, for some at least, has been the hybrid turn-based and real-time structure for play. Once you get used to it, it makes sense; but it remains frustrating to work with even for veterans of the system, simply because of the constant back-and-forthing between real-time and stopped modes the game requires. If you can stop a game during play, it's really turn-based in design – the question is then why you would want to play it in real-time.

Once again, this hybrid approach was fine a few years back, when the technology for mixing real-time and player control elements was still relatively primitive. These days, though, a number of game designs (most significantly **Command and Conquer**, of course) have made clear that it's possible to balance player intervention with ongoing action in a game meant to be primarily operational in focus. The stop mode in **Breach 3** could thus be seen as a measure meant to deal with the fact that the player can lose track of what's going on during real-time, an opportunity to catch up. Good play balance should theoretically achieve the same ideal without the need for stop-time, however.

Getting started – don't forget critical pieces of equipment

Now, if the in-game graphics were this good...

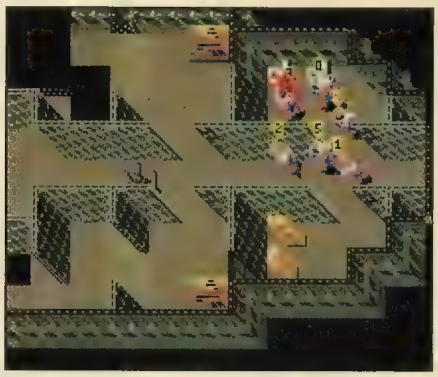
Proponents of the **Breach** system will argue that the ability to stop the game, investigate the current situation in detail without any time pressure, issue finely-tuned commands to units, and then start it up again is a real advantage for thoughtful play over the more arcade-like pressure of a continuous real-time system. They have a point. If you really want to play a tactical game intelligently, and don't get excited over the arcade-like experiences of ambush present in the more intensively real-time designs, **Breach 3** might prove a good compromise on that score. In particular, the fact that your squad can spread out anywhere they want over a mission, to the point where a number of units go off-map, means that – at least in this design – you really do need stop-time to reassess the progress and situation of each of your team's members. Tracking options reduce the need for stops to handle this fact about the real-time tactical play, but even those prove insufficient to keep on top of the action once things really get going in a mission.

In other, less significant areas for gamers looking for good, tactical/operational play, it should be made clear in any review that **Breach 3's** graphics are positively dated. There's not enough action going on to make excuses for the game's having shipped in VGA, and at a time when *Impressions* is finally ramping up the quality of their art-work and interface design to industry-competitive standards, **Breach 3** feels too much like a legacy of the old attitudes towards the visuals at the company.

On the positive side in this part of the design, at least the VGA graphics make **Breach 3** more visually consistent with **Rules of Engagement 2**, an earlier *Omnitrend* game which **Breach 3** can "interlock" with. Missions and campaigns can be designed with the extensive builder for **Breach 3** and missions can then be essentially ported into **ROE2** campaigns (the manual offers no real information on how to do this, by the way, an amazing faux pas, at least for the six of us still playing **Rules of Engagement 2**). The interface is much more **ROE2**-like, ensuring continuity between the two game engines. The negative here is that this interface has to be one of the most unintuitive ever conceived for first-time players; it makes the front end for **When Two Worlds War** look like a recent *Sierra* graphics adventure interface by comparison.

In sum, **Breach 3** is a mixed bag; a definite consideration for those who've been waiting for something to interlock into **ROE2**, a definite disappointment for those who've considered the **Breach** system potential groundwork for an excellent tactical game, and a love-it/hate-it choice for players new to gaming, and to this game in particular. Whether *Impressions/Omnitrend* does anything further with the design remains to be seen – at least an updating to SVGA would be in order.

Steve Wartofsky



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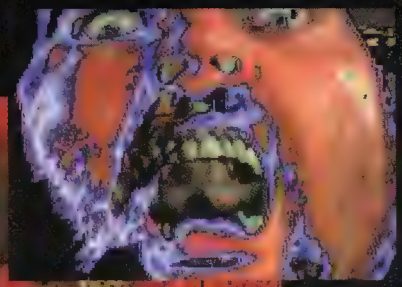

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Reader Service No. 68

Designed by Intelligent Games
Published by Maxis
Platform MS-DOS

SimIsle

Running a small Pacific island may not seem like much fun, but *Maxis* is hoping they can interest a wide range of gamers in doing just that with their recent release of **SimIsle**. As with their other games, several specific scenarios are included as well as a general generic island where you can pick out your own goals.

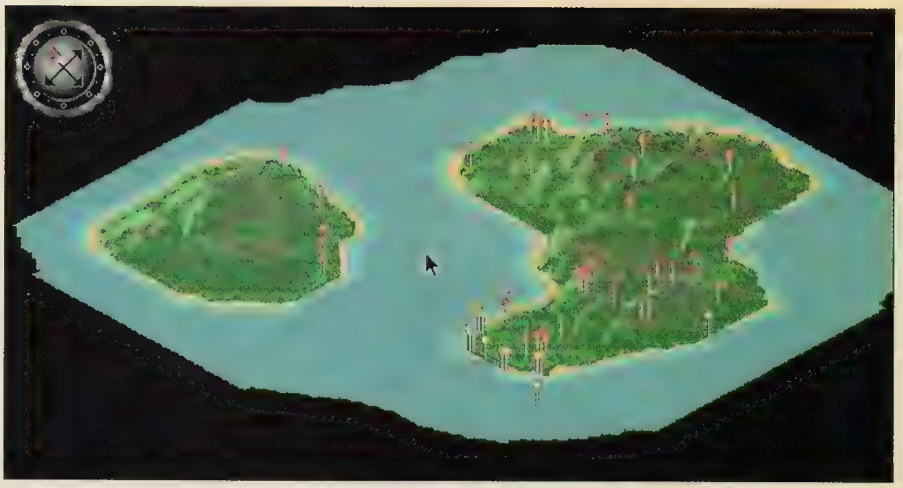
While you are in charge, you don't do any of the work yourself. That is the task of your agents, up to ten of which can be on staff at any time. Each agent has a different set of skills and you must decide who to send where to accomplish what you need, possibly enhancing their skill level through training at headquarters.

After you get your starting crew, hiring and firing as needed to get the best mix, it is time to start building and enhancing your island. Tourism is one of the most important money makers for most Pacific islands, and this is also true in the game.

A ferry or airport gets the people to your island. Hotels and beach attractions provide a place for them to stay and spend money. Some special sites may be discovered, but most will be ones you have built yourself. Both hotels and beach resorts will need to be enlarged and have their quality increased to bring the most money into your coffers.

Though tourism will usually be your most important money maker, you will also frequently use the many natural resources of the island. Coal, iron ore, silver and gold can all be mined, if present and can be either exported or, in the case of coal and ore, used on the island to produce finished goods.

You can log, though it is quite inefficient and importing logs is often the cheapest way to get the materials you need. Many islands also have rich oilfields that can be tapped to bring even more cash to your treasury, or be used in your race to industrialize.



An overview of your island. Pins mark different sites

In addition to their use in expanding cities and building various facilities, raw materials can also be used in the production of various end products, such as cheap and quality consumer goods, plastics, heavy machinery and cars. As your population grows, your residents will actually demand these. While you can often ignore them, you do it at your own peril as they may riot if mad enough.

Keeping them happy, and growing, involves taking care of their needs. Villages produce the food to keep your people fed and growing, as well as providing a source of unskilled laborers. Towns, and the cities they grow into, produce the skilled workers you will need if you build more advanced industrial facilities.

Not all your island's riches are immediately obvious. Exploring agents can find treasures hidden away throughout the island. Pots of cash, lost cities, and other things make time spent exploring worthwhile.

Money makes the world go round, at least on this island. Every action will require money, and agent's time, and possibly a number of raw materials. Building must be done with some planning as well, since each bit of growth has a little more impact on the environment.

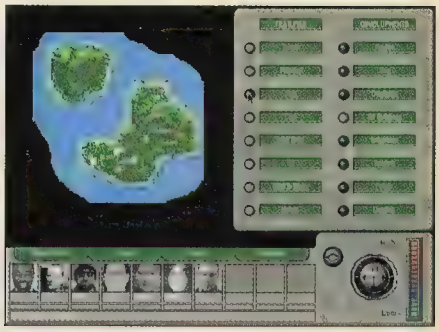
The graphics in **SimIsle** are on par with those in other **Sim** games. An overhead view is used for most play and optional animations visually show things your onscreen counterparts are doing. The sound effects provide nice feedback on what is happening on your island. Mouse control can be a bit sluggish at times but still works reasonably well.

Many areas lack polish however. Because you have to manually assign each action, the game can quickly become tedious in certain cases, such as when you have to import a large amount of wood in many small shipments. Figuring out what is going on behind the scenes can also be a bit tricky. The manual is sparse on how to successfully run an island, almost to the point that it looks like they want to boost sales of the guide books that are sure to follow.

Die-hard fans of the **Sim** series will certainly want to add this to their library immediately. Even with its flaws, it can be fun to play and fits with the general *Maxis* theme. Others will want to wait for *Maxis* to come out with its planned update. **SimIsle** has the seeds of greatness in it, but they are not fully germinated. The future should remedy this if past history is any example.

R. Bradley Andrews

Agent Billy Tell is importing lumber



A few places to fish on this island

Agent Bob Moon is ready to build a new site

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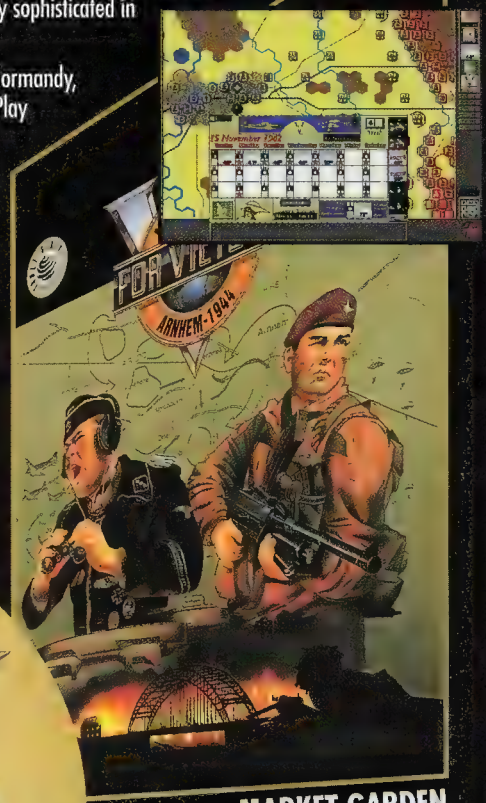


MARKET GARDEN

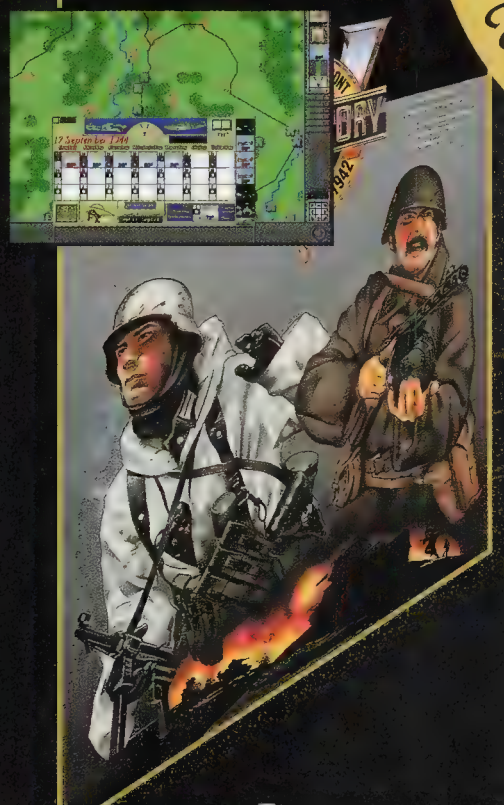
GOLD•JUNO•SWORD

END OF WORLD WAR II
1945-1995

FOR VICTORY

COMMEMORATIVE COLLECTION

VELIKIYE LUKI



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MAC CD-ROM

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IBM CD-ROM

Reader Service No. 25

Designed by Impressions Software
Published by Sierra
Platform DOS

Caesar II

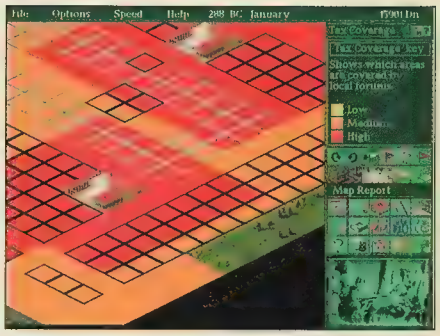
You could never fault them for trying, but try as they might, *Impressions* have never been able to put all the pieces together to create that world-class strategy game. They *have* had a number of good ideas (like **Air Bucks** and **Detroit**), which were marred by clumsy interfaces, poor presentation, and/or artificial intelligence (AI) problems.

That all changes with the release of **Caesar II**, which is by far the best thing *Impressions* has ever done, and is the best strategy game/builder since **SimCity 2000**. In many respects, it's a better *game* then **SimCity**, since it offers more than just city building. It is also an aesthetic triumph for a company that's never been known for aesthetics, possessing a clean, uncluttered graphic look embellished with just enough multimedia chrome to satisfy the drooling masses who just can't get enough of those rendered scenes.

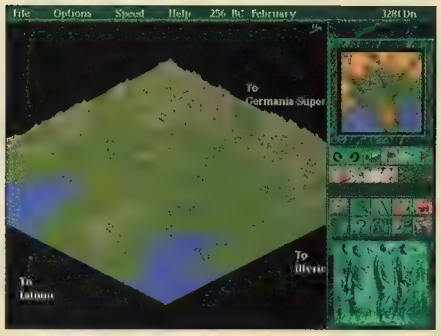
The game is set in the third century BC during the infancy of the Roman Republic. You are the Governor of a Roman province who must prove himself to the Emperor by building up your province (or city) to greatness. If you reach a certain level, you can be promoted to another province, with the ultimate goal of being crowned Caesar – Emperor of Rome.

The comparisons which can be drawn between this game and **SimCity 2000** are plentiful. In **Caesar II** you have two game modes, city or provincial. Playing it on the city level makes it nearly identical to **SimCity** (which makes the **SimRoman** comparison even more apt). You start with nothing and build a city of your design, planning an infrastructure, setting up industry and housing, quelling disorder and generally being SimGod (hey, now *that* would be a groovy strategy game).

I found the implementation of the infrastructure much more complex and intriguing in **Caesar II**. Developing a water system is the most important element of your cities, and if done correctly will do a lot toward keeping your little Romans happy (and perhaps more importantly, clean and fresh smelling). They also need jobs, schools, entertainment, and places of worship. If they cannot get to any of these services they start to get unhappy, with rioting the usual end-result. You also have to worry about invading hordes of barbarians and various other foreigners.



An example of an excellent design – instead of graphs you get overlays on the actual maps that tell you exactly how each square is doing. Here, we check tax coverage



This province has trade routes in all directions. Set up a trading post with warehouses near the border towns and they will fill up with raw materials that you'll be able to use in your towns

If you are playing the city level, this is all you have to worry about. If you are playing the provincial level, you not only have to develop various cities but also have to provide the raw materials that your in-town businesses need to operate by setting up farms and quarries. The provincial level is structured as a series of scenarios that the player must complete in order to advance in stature to Emperor. Each scenario revolves around developing a strong central city, but you may have to link a series of towns, establish trades, or defend yourself against hostile neighbors.

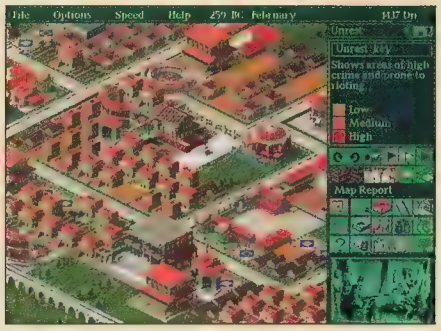
Ah, combat. Yet another area where this game differs greatly from the usual **Sim** game. The original **Caesar** could be linked to a game called **Cohort** in order to play out the battles, and it did so with little success. **Caesar II** has an improved combat system, played out in an isometric view (in keeping with the overall graphic look of the game) that somewhat resembles an old game from *Electronic Arts* called **Centurion**. Frankly, the combat does little for me, but that's just a personal bias – I let the computer handle my battles while I concentrate on the aspects of the game that really interest me.

The biggest criticism I can level against the game is its brief documentation. While it describes how to play the game, it's quite short on actual information about how things work together. For example, it talks about how you can monitor unrest but gives you few hints on how to make those sims happier. In true modern gaming fashion, the game expects you to buy the inevitable hint book. Regardless, if you are on-line you can find the hints you need (or you can just wait until *Strategy Plus* runs some), and this is not the first, or last game, to feature a sparse manual.

What it may lack in originality (it's always better to be good than it is to be original), **Caesar II** has playability in spades. A clean interface, impressively detailed graphics, a solid design, and engaging gameplay make this an all-nighter sort of program. You know the kind. You just have to try one more thing and let your city run for one more year. When you do finally turn in for the night you end up sitting in bed for a while thinking of different strategies and designs you could have used. You look forward to trying those ideas the next time you start up the program. That's the mark of the great strategy game – and that's exactly what **Caesar II** is.

Steve Bauman

One idea for city design. Houses are within three squares of a road and near markets, schools, and places of worship



Always keep an eye on the level of unrest in your city – one riot can ruin an entire Circus Maximus

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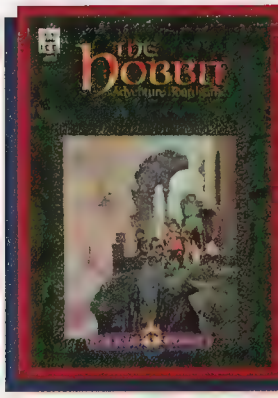

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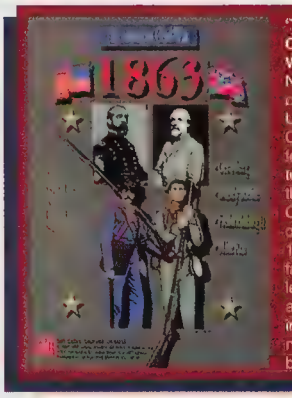

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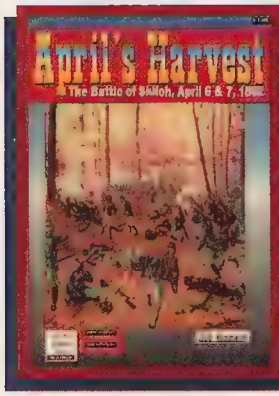

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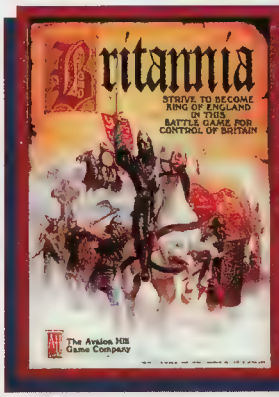

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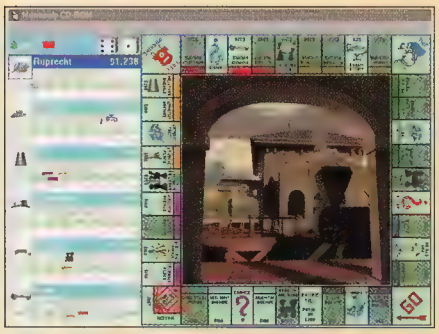
Monopoly

Like just about everyone else I know, my family had a copy of *Parker Brothers'* most famous of games, **Monopoly**. That beat up old box was often dragged out of the game closet and onto the den carpet, where we'd flop down for a long afternoon of acquisitions, horse trading, foreclosures, and, of course, Free Parking bonuses. Despite all the time I put in with **Monopoly**, I can never remember winning; or, rather, being *allowed* to win. It seems the other kids always began to lose interest just as I was beginning to clean up. Ever since then I've had a burning desire to have an opponent I could always play, and one who would never quit. I had hopes when the first versions of **Monopoly** came out on various computer platforms, but they were soon dashed—the games just didn't cut it. Now, however, it looks like my dreams are coming true with the release of *Virgin/Westwood's* enhanced version of the old classic. Run under **Windows 3.1** or **Windows 95**, this delightful rendition of the board game far surpasses earlier computerized efforts and, in some ways, even tops the original. The graphics are both beautiful and charming, the interface is much more accessible than in earlier efforts, and the gameplay options are extensive.

Prepare to be delighted, because the beautifully rendered 3-D animation can do nothing but bring a smile to your face. I thought I was something when I made my race car token zoom around the cardboard board, but whoa! *Westwood* makes it zoom, chug, shimmy, skate and dance around the board, plus others I'm sure I've not seen yet... And this is only *one* token! There is animation for just about everything—rolling the dice, getting a Chance card, going to jail, visiting jail, you name it. The options menu lets you selectively turn off certain categories of animation. Turning off all the animation makes for much faster game play, and is definitely recommended for Internet play. The sounds are also wonderful. You have both period background music and specific sound effects for different events. Everything fits—the music is happy, and the sound effects seem to come right out of Saturday morning cartoons.

The game would, of course, be nothing but a pretty shell without a decent game of **Monopoly** inside, and here again you're in for a treat—we finally have a great game of **Monopoly** for the computer. You can play regulation **Monopoly**, or turn on any of a number of optional rules (like the famous Free Parking option). Trading, land auctions, and even cheating are allowed. The only place the game interface bogs down a bit is in the trading dialog box—it's not entirely intuitive (although at worst a reading of the short manual will be needed to clear up any confusion).

Am I racing to victory?



Waiting for the B&O to pull out of its station

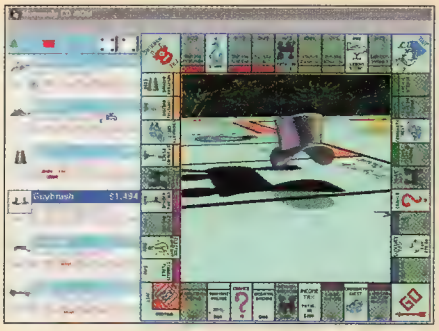
You are given ten computer opponents with a range of skill; furthermore you can even design your own opponents. This takes no programming knowledge—instead, you have to merely copy and edit an artificial intelligence (AI) definition file. Such a file consists of dozens of numeric values you set, each of which affect the computer's AI; there are even secret options you can only find listed on the *Westwood* home page. Even the Simple AI character could play at a novice level, offering you trades and considering your counter offers. A one-human versus five AI players takes a while to work through—the computer players work for themselves instead of all ganging up on you.

One criticism I have is the difficulty of doing anything while you're waiting for the computer players to all make their moves—it would be nice to be able to do administrative things (like saving the game, pausing it, or even exiting!) before your turn comes up.

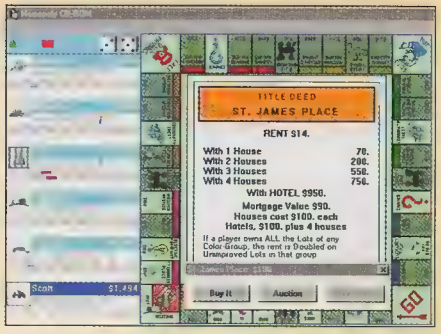
Monopoly supports both network and Internet play. To use the Internet option you need a "SLIP/PPP" connection to the net. You can use a Web browser to visit the **Monopoly** home page, or the included **WChat** program to visit a special chat server where you can talk in real-time to other **Monopoly** owners from the world; the **WChat** program even helps to initiate cross-Internet **Monopoly** sessions. Perhaps the most unique feature of this networking capability is the ability to play in different languages—you in English with dollars, another in German with marks, etc. While the game doesn't really support modem-to-modem games, be sure to check out the readme file—if both computers are using **Windows 95** you can use **Windows'** dial-up networking function to fool the game into playing a network game. *Westwood* seems to be really committed to this aspect of the game, and I suspect it will grow to become its most popular feature.

Opponentless **Monopoly** fans everywhere can rejoice—*Westwood* has given us the computer-based **Monopoly** game we've been waiting for. We can now find someone (either computer or, using the Internet, human) to play a realistic game with us any time of day, and play it well. Even those of you who get to play the board game regularly will have a treat—the charming graphics are sure to be a crowd pleaser, and the ability to play internationally over the Internet promises to offer a unique cross-cultural experience.

Scott Udell



The tokens are brought to life in dozens of cheerful animations



The deed to St. James Place—should I buy, or put it up for auction?

Steel Panthers FAQ

(Some of) What the Manual Didn't Tell You

SSI's **Steel Panthers** is causing great waves out in the cyber-ocean (hey, they call it web surfing, so it must be an ocean, right?). Thus far, messages seem about equally divided between praise for the game, bug reports, and requests for rules clarifications due to the extremely terse manual. *SSI* has already released a patch (to version 1.1) fixing some of the bugs (and some claim, introducing others), and another is on the way. Lots of rules questions are being answered, which is great for those of you with on-line access, but it doesn't help the un-wired among us.

So, as a public service, or at least as an excuse to put **Steel Panthers** on the cover again, we at *Strategy Plus* decided to do a little net crawling, collect some of the most frequently asked questions and answers, and print them. Much of the information comes from Gary Grigsby or *SSI* via *GEnie*. Many, many thanks to Gary for taking the time to look over the information here and make corrections and additions, and to Matt, the infinitely patient *GEnie SSI* rep. Matt is a stellar example of what an on-line rep ought to be. Give him a raise, *SSI*!

Tables included with the version 1.1 update provide much more data than given in the game

Life's a beach! Let's fight our way to the beer bong

Steel Panthers Frequently Asked Questions

1) What determines whether an infantry unit assaults or just fires? Further, is there any benefit to assaulting with all shots remaining, as opposed to just one or two?

Infantry will assault from one hex away if their suppression level is less than six; otherwise, they'll only fire. It doesn't matter whether you have one shot left, or six. Your chance of success remains the same. An assaulting unit must pass both a morale check and a skill check in order to succeed.

2) What are the limitations of turretless AFV's?

Turretless AFVs may only fire at targets in their front firing arc. Turretless AFVs do not search as well as turreted AFVs when they are buttoned. Turretless AFVs are allowed a maximum of one facing change in order to perform opportunity fire. Once this has occurred they may only fire at targets in their front arc for the remainder of the enemy's orders phase.

3) How can I get a crew to return to an abandoned gun or tank?

If the crew of an abandoned AFV/gun is able to move back into the hex with its original AFV/gun then it should automatically re-crew the weapon during the morale phase at the end of the turn (unless it becomes highly suppressed again before it can do this).

TIP! Infantry units will assume the same suppression value as that of any APC they're traveling in. This can be a fast way to reduce suppression, assuming you can get them to load. Don't be surprised if this changes in a future update.

4) During deployment, I click on the Entrench All button, but when the scenario starts, my units still aren't entrenched!!

The entrench feature only works in certain types of battle. In assault battles, both the attacker and defender may buy off-map artillery, minefields and dragon's-teeth, and they may also entrench. In advance or meeting engagement battles, neither player may buy off-map artillery or improve their positions in any way. The unit purchase menu has a "Mission" button which tells you the type of battle you are fighting.

5) How does the Rally feature work? Why should I manually rally troops when I have auto-rally turned on anyway?

As a unit takes fire, or undergoes other combat stress, it will begin to accumulate suppression points. Suppression causes a unit to become pinned, to retreat, rout, or even to surrender (if there is an enemy in an adjacent hex). In addition, AFVs become buttoned. Units will lose some of their shots and do a worse job of spotting enemies when they are suppressed.

Rallying units successfully will reduce their suppression levels. At the end of a turn units will make a morale check based on suppression levels. At this point, their movement status (routed, retreating, etc.) can be changed. However, units which lose shots due to high suppression will get them back immediately when rallied. This is why you should give attention to rallying troops manually.

During a turn, you should rally troops a) when they've lost one or more shots and

need them back, or b) if their suppression levels are getting high enough to cause them to become pinned or worse. The adverse effects of suppression are based on morale. When a unit's suppression level is equal to its morale figure divided by 10, it becomes pinned. When it reaches twice this number, it retreats, and when it hits *three* times the number, it becomes routed. So, as an example, a unit with a morale of 65 will become pinned when its suppression reaches 6 (the figure is rounded down), it will retreat when its suppression hits 12, and it will rout when its suppression hits 18.

How rallying works:

When you attempt to rally a unit, the game first looks at the unit's platoon leader (assuming he's in range, i.e. within 5 hexes). That officer then makes a "roll" to see if it rallies the unit. If it rolls successfully, the unit's suppression is reduced to one half of what it was, and the rally attempt ends. If the officer fails his attempt, the game next looks to see if the HQ officer is in range. If the HQ officer is in range, *he'll* make a rally roll. If he fails, the unit falls back on its sergeant to try. Obviously, as a worse case, a unit will always have one leader in range—the sergeant who travels with the unit.

If an officer succeeds in his efforts, he can then go on to attempt to rally other units (or the same unit again). If he fails, however, no further attempts may be made by that officer in that turn, including during the auto-rally phase. This means that (assuming all leaders are in range) the first unit in a formation to get a rally attempt will have the best chance of success, as it has all three leaders to draw upon. If a leader fails his attempt, then other units will have fewer leaders to rely on.

The thing to keep in mind is to rally manually when you really need it, and don't waste attempts on units with low suppression levels or that are out of harm's way. Leave those for the last, or let the auto-rally tend to them.

6) How does a leader's ratings affect a unit's chance to hit a target?

When a unit attempts to fire on a target, there is a 50% chance that *the base chance to hit* will be modified by that unit's experience level, a 25% chance that it will be modified by the unit's leader's skill level, and a 25% chance that it will be modified by the formation leader's skill level.

Once that is determined, an accuracy check is made against the appropriate skill or experience level. If it fails, the unit fires at ¼ of its base accuracy. If the first check succeeds, the unit attempts a second. If the second check is made, the unit fires at 1.5 times its base accuracy (if the second check is missed, it fires at its base accuracy).

7) The battle generator always seems to make huge battles! Why is this?

When using the battle generator, player one determines the size of the battle. If he only buys 200 points worth of units, the other side will buy points accordingly (the same amount for meeting engagements, in a ratio of 2-1 attacker to defender for assaults, etc.)

8) When an infantry unit is attacked, I see a report that says something like "2 men killed (5)." What does the 5 represent?

Even with all this info, it'd be tough to beat these odds

The number in parentheses is the total number of men this unit has lost in the current scenario.

9) One of my tanks took a single hit, and lost all of its ammunition, permanently! Is this a bug?

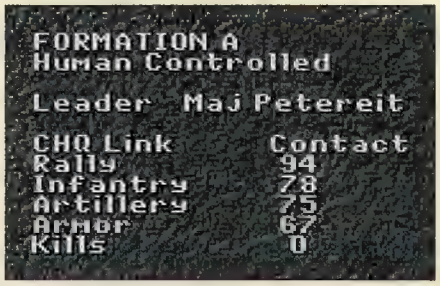
If a tank takes a hit that destroys one or more of its weapon systems, this damage is simulated by zeroing out the ammo supply for the weapons destroyed.

10) If a unit is equipped with a radio, how could it ever be out of contact with its HQ?

When a radio-equipped unit is outside the 5 hex range of its superiors, it must make a skill roll in order to use the radio successfully. In addition, the unit's leader must also make the same skill roll. If either side fails the skill roll, the unit will be out of contact.

Well, that's it for now. If there's some question you have that wasn't covered, feel free to send it in to me. I make no guarantees, but if there's sufficient interest I'll cover a few questions in Command Post from time to time (assuming I can impose on Gary's good nature to answer more questions for us!). By the way, the 1.1 patch includes weapon statistics tables, which are quite handy to have. Trust me, you want these. Now get back to the battlefield, ya treadheads!

Peter Smith



Have you been wondering how these numbers work?

Terrain Effects Chart for Soft Targets

(shown as an ATTACK STRENGTH modifier)

HARD COVER
dug-in x 1/8
positioned/pinned x 1/4 (vs small arms x 1/8)

SOFT COVER
dug-in infantry x 1/6
dug-in gun x 1/4
positioned/pinned x 1/3

CLEAR
dug-in infantry x 1/4
dug-in gun x 1/3
pinned x 1/2
moved >1 hex x 2

If unit is dug-in and has not fired for one turn then small arms fire is multiplied by 1/6 against that unit (this is in addition to all other modifiers shown above)

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Reader Service No. 32

THE 11TH HOUR
{*the five stages.*}

1
Shock.

You finally figure out The 7th Guest™, only to hear that its sequel, The 11th Hour is going to be released.

2
Disbelief.

This can't be true! You read the articles, memorize the reviews, & talk incessantly about The 11th Hour. Friends shun you.

3
Resentment.

They said it would be out, & you believed them. Where is it?! Why would they lie to you?!!

4
Acceptance.

It's out!!! Finally! It's everything they said it would be & more. Now, if you could just figure out what is behind the....

5
Death.

MATURE M AGES 17+

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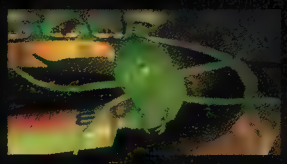


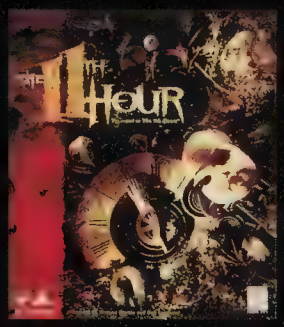
The 3-D graphics will whiten your hair, not your teeth.

Relax, and let us draw you a nice hot bloodbath.

"Gee Wally, Mrs. Cleaver isn't so nice anymore."

Nineteen puzzles kill precious time, as well as brain cells.

You can stop grieving now. The 11th Hour: The sequel to the 7th Guest™, has finally arrived. This PC CD-ROM game fuses incredible 3-D graphics and mind-numbing challenges with a full-length psychological thriller. It's also 12 times bigger and 2 CDs longer than its predecessor. So, is The 11th Hour really worth the wait? Well, we think it's totally killer.



It's finally arrived.

Reader Service No. 160

Ascendancy

Chronomysts do it on time

You say you've just colonized your planet and can't do a thing with it? Then the following hints should be right up your alley, illuminating sectors left unexplored by **Ascendancy**'s manual.

When you go exploring, take some colony modules along. Colonize everything. Even if you lose the systems later, you won't lose technology or anything else except that system when/if it falls and you gain the ability to construct one ship for **every** system you control. Colonizing planets in systems that other players control will limit their expansion unless they're willing to go to war and will give you important repair facilities near the "front lines."

Once a planet has built up to an industry of about twenty (or is full, in the case of small and tiny worlds) put up a space dock. Space docks let you refit older hulls with new equipment and replace invasion, colonization and other one-use modules your ships have expended. They also let you repair damage to a ship. In order to repair a ship you **must** replace at least one component.

Ships are an expensive proposition and can take weeks or months to construct. Consequently it is advisable to construct shipyards only on the largest and most industrious planets. The early home world and other early colonies being exceptions to the rule.

Keep track of how many more ships you can build. If you have just discovered a new device you may place it on a ship under construction by building a new ship in the same shipyard

The best way to shake-down a new ship design is to have the ship beat up on other ships and planets and have the rest of your fleet fire back. My early designs carried an excess of weapons and other energy users and all too few generators. A good warship design should have one or perhaps two engines, a stardrive and no more than one-fifth its space devoted to weapons or specials and the rest devoted to generators. You can add a few extras when you start building large and enormous hulls.

Shields are a matter of individual preference. I found the extra energy I could carry in place of the shields much more useful. After all, when you're out of juice you can't fight. My enormous hull carries eight weapons or weapon/related devices, two engines, one stardrive and two other specials, the rest is devoted to generators.

Far better to build dedicated ships rather than multipurpose ships. While it may be tempting to put a colonizer or invasion module or two on a warship hull, resist the impulse. Since these are use-once devices, when they are gone you can either continue to drive the hull around with that space being wasted or send the ship back to space dock just to replace a couple of modules. While it may only take a few days to replace those modules, unless your ship is "standing" on a space dock it will be out of service for two weeks or more because of transit time.

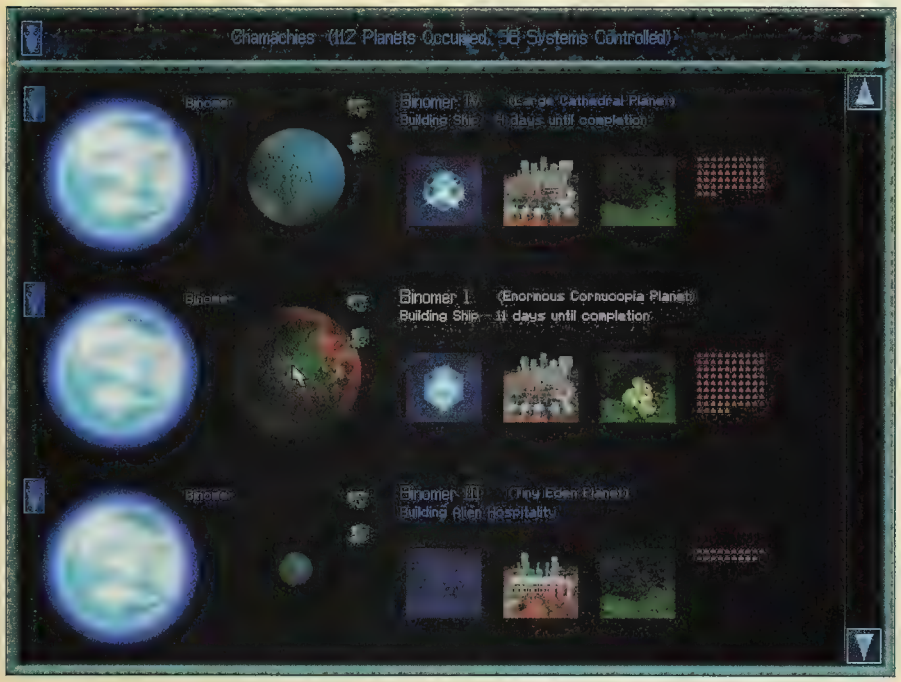
A good place to install sensors is on your invasion/colonization hulls. Build a few that have some sensors and move them with your fleet to see what you're up against. Once you know the opposition, you can replace the sensor modules with invasion or colonization modules when you send those vessels back for refit.

Location, location, location

When choosing a planet to colonize, the biggest may not always be the best. Overall, planets with the most red squares will be more productive and useful in the long term and take less time to develop. After your ship is in orbit, look for a colony site that is near red and green squares if possible. Given a choice between

Planetary Production Table

Item	Industry	Science	Prosperity	Living Space	Notes
Colony	1	-	1	-	Takes advantage of red and green squares
Factory	1	-	-	-	-
Laboratory	-	1	-	-	-
Agriplot	-	-	1	-	-
Outpost	-	-	-	1	-
Habitat	-	-	2	3	-
Metroplex	1	1	1	2	-
Megafacility	2	-	-	-	-
Art. Hydroponifer	-	-	2	-	-
Research Campus	-	2	-	-	-
Logic Factory	-	1	1	-	-
Engineering Retreat	1	1	-	-	-
Hyperpower Plant	50% bonus	-	-	-	-
Fertilizer Plant	-	-	50% bonus	-	Applied before Endless Party
Internet	-	50% bonus	-	-	-
Cloning Plant	-	-	+1 person	-	Doubles population when it grows
Scientist Takeover	-	+½ of industry	-	-	Adds 50% of industrial capacity to science
Endless Party	-	-	-	-	-
Lush Growth Bomb	-	-	-	10	One-time benefit
Automation	-	-	-	-	Frees 1 worker
Red Square	+1	-	-	-	Adds 1 if built on
Green Square	-	-	+1	-	Adds 1 if built on
Blue Square	-	+1	-	-	Adds 1 if built on



You can quickly go to any planet from the planets list by clicking on the planet itself or the planet's three indices. You can proceed to the system of that planet by clicking on the star

building near or on a red square or a green, choose the red square.

Industry is at a premium early in a colony's existence and you can build two and sometimes three factories before you will need an agriplot or artificial hydroponifer. If you have to you can build transport tubes across white squares as well as black in order to reach valuable red and green squares. You can always abandon the transport tubes later and build on those sites.

Always colonize a planet that has a xenological site and plop your colony down right next to it. Start working on a xenological dig immediately even before building factories. True, you will lose the fifty days it takes to complete a dig, but these sites will give you items **way** down on the research tree.

The Daily Planet

Planets come in five sizes: Tiny, with seven spaces, small, with eleven, medium with twenty-three, large with forty-five and enormous, with seventy-three spaces. There are twelve planetary types. Husks have nothing but black spaces. Primordials are a little better. Fifty percent of them is covered with black while the rest is white with few colored spaces. Congenial planets are twenty percent black with a few more colored squares. Eden planets have no black squares, have twenty percent green squares and a few blue and reds. Mineral planets are forty percent black, ten percent red. The rest of the squares are mostly white and a few colored. Super mineral planets are twenty percent black, twenty percent red. The rest are white with a few colored. Chapel planets have forty percent black squares and ten percent blue. The remainder are white and some colored. Cathedral planets are twenty percent black, twenty percent blue. The rest being white and a few colored. Rich planets have forty percent black squares, ten percent each are red, blue and green with thirty percent white remaining. Tycoon planets are twenty percent black and fifteen percent each of red, blue and green. The rest are white. Special planets are one-third white, one-third black, fifteen percent green with a few blue and reds left over. Cornucopias are wonderful. Their spaces are equally divided among red, green and blue squares.

While it may not seem useful, colonizing even tiny husk worlds can eventually pay off. Once these small worlds have three or four factories and a hydropower plant, build a planetary shield and then your best weapon. While they are not much alone, they do have to be subdued and if there are several of these mites in a system they can subject your foes to the death of a thousand nibbles. Once you have achieved the breakthrough of scientist takeover you can use these planets to give a boost to your scientific endeavors.

Well, the Frutmaka are here and would like to discuss the annexation of the entire galaxy, so I gotta go. If you have any questions or comments you can reach me as Sam.Baker on *GEnie* and on *CompuServe* at 72662,3066. Happy conquering.

Samuel Brown Baker II

I'll race you

Each of the races in **Ascendancy** has a special ability that is unique from all the other races. Most of these abilities have a "recharge time" listed in days. Once the special ability is used it may not be used again until that number of days have passed. After the golden number of days have expired you will be told you are able to use your ability once more. Unfortunately, you can only hold one "use" of your special power at a time. You do not continue accumulating days if you can already use your ability. Recharging only starts again when you have used it up.

Special Abilities

- Minion invasions always succeed.
- Snovemdomas ship hulls are double-strength.
- Orfas can build on black squares.
- Kambuchkas see everyone's home worlds at the start of the game.
- Hanshacks can talk to everyone from the beginning of the game.
- Fludentri can repair all ship damage every sixty days.
- Balifids can force races to declare peace with them every one-hundred days.
- Swaparamans can double their ships' power every sixty-two days.
- Frutmaka can warp opponents' ships away from their colonies every seventy-seven days.
- Shevar can wipe out the power of opponents' ships in their systems every ninety days.
- Govorom can transform their least populated world into a rich world every one-hundred and fifty days.
- Ungooma can send ships back home every seventy days.
- Dubtaks can steal technology known by two other races every sixty-three days and everybody likes them, for some darn reason.
- Capelons can make their colonies immune to invasion for one day every sixty-six days.
- Mebes can increase the maximum population of all their colonies every seventy-two days.
- Oculobes can see all star lanes at the beginning of the game.
- Arbryls can block the star lanes to their colonies every ninety-two days.
- Marmosians can make species at war with them hate each other every one-hundred days.
- Chronomysts travel faster through the star lanes.
- Chamachies can complete any research once every eighty-nine days.
- Nimbuloids can complete their colonies' projects once every sixty-eight days.

THE ULTIMATE

"...SSI has awakened the beast."
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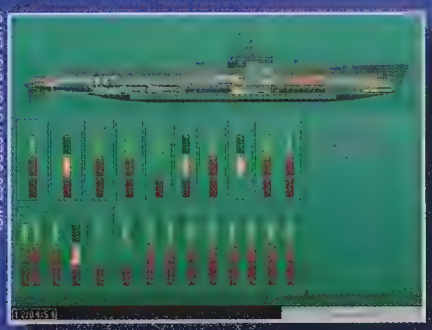

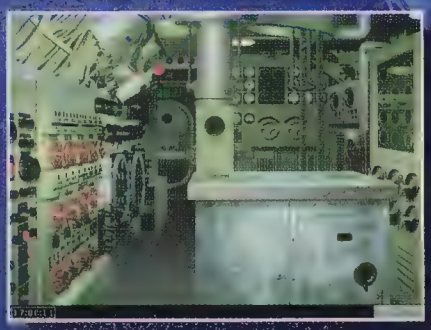

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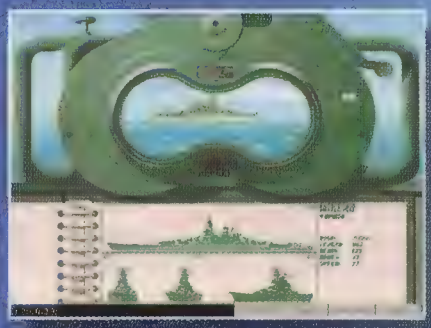

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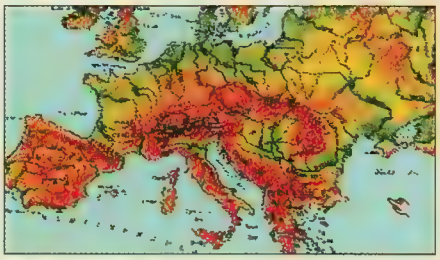
D-Day: America Invades



Some suggestions for your boccage brew-up

The third in *Avalon Hill's* **World at War** series, **D-Day: America Invades (AI)** takes us away from the fast sweeping maneuvers of the North African desert and the massive fronts on the Russian steppes and returns us to the Normandy coastline. For those of you with experience on the deserts or steppes, get ready to re-think your strategies; for those of you who've played the original **V for Victory** game **Utah Beach**, be prepared for a completely revised game engine that presents you with many new situations.

The **AI** may be the most balanced of the games I've played in the **World at War** series—both sides face advantages and disadvantages in the conflict that will stretch your command and your organizational abilities to the limit. As the Axis, you have the good fortune to be situated in an area with terrain that is a defender's dream—extensive tracts of boccage (or hedgerows) and swamp will make your job a lot easier. You are, however, hampered by (depending on the variants you choose) a deficit of strong units ready to push the invaders back and strong Allied air attacks that can make moving reinforcements and supplies a nightmare.

As the Americans, you will (depending, again, on the variants you choose) be facing a surprised, less than cohesive defense. You will have tremendous air capabilities and off shore naval gunfire support, and will be secure in the knowledge that, if you can defend the beachhead, waves of reinforcements await. However, you will face nightmares different from but equally as difficult to defeat as those the Axis faces—the "Hedgerow Hell" will not only blunt your assaults and wear down your combat forces, but it will make your strategic movement and logistics support extremely difficult. Despite the Allied advantage in production and manpower, your combat operations have to rely on the flimsy supply bottlenecks of the two beachheads, where bad weather can bring your attacks to a grinding halt and an adroit enemy assault might defeat you completely.

Rapid thrust or cautious advance?

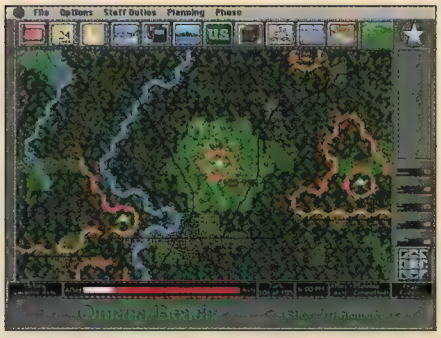
Because of the difficulty of maintaining operations across wide stretches of the Normandy terrain versus the critical importance of reaching your objectives, this question of bold or safe should play a part in your planning like never before. Gauge a situation before you start in on a course of action: first, read the scenario description and make certain you're aware of the objectives and the time you have to reach them; second, keep evaluating the situation as it develops.

For example, in "Bradley's Nightmare" you only have eleven turns to complete your operations; both sides are on the defensive (you hold one of the objectives) and the offensive (you probably need to get the other objective to win). As the

In "Bradley's Nightmare" the Germans must rush for Balleroy, but watch out for American reinforcements arriving from the North and an American threat to Caumont!

Americans you need to immediately grab Caumont and hold on for dear life; if you're cautious here and wait for reinforcements, you'll lose. As the Axis, you need to secure Caumont and drive on Balleroy (perhaps even bypassing many of the forward American units). The conditions in "Bradley's Nightmare" call for rapid, daring moves, especially if you're faced by a cautious enemy commander (and the computer tends to play a cautious game).

However, overly ambitious advancement can defeat you even more readily than combat can. For example, I'm currently slogging through a game of the big "Omaha Beach" scenario. I started out pushing fairly quickly away from Omaha, especially in the East. My forces captured Trevieres early,



<CTRL-ALT>-clicking on Hill 122 shows its spotting radius

and pushed down towards the Drome river and Hill 192 in the Southeast; I even sent units out of supply and captured the (undefended) towns of St. Lo and Caumont. This I'd done pretty much by turn 50, but at a tremendous cost: my units were exhausted, my supply lines extremely attenuated, the post D-Day storms limited my reinforcements and air support, and the Axis was firmly entrenched from just west of Point du Hoc southwestward through Isigny into Carentan, with reinforcements coming up from the south. It wasn't until around turn 90 that I was able to get Isigny and achieve linkup between the forces of Utah and Omaha beaches, and at turn 104 the Axis still holds Carentan, has a dug-in pocket between Isigny and Point Du Hoc tying up many of my reinforcements, and my "line" (such as it is) from the Vire across Hill 192 to the Drome is still stalled (due to exhaustion and lack of supplies more than enemy action). I pushed too fast, too hard, and across too broad a front, not paying close enough attention to the terrain and, especially, to the issues of supply and movement.

Supply and movement

As the game manual says on page 70, keeping units in supply "is the single most important thing you can do to influence the effectiveness of your forces." While supply is important in all the games of the **World at War** series, it is critically important in **AI**; indeed, in some situations correctly handled logistics is the key factor to winning a scenario. Finding this key can sometimes be something of a puzzle (you need to manipulate things just so to unlock the door to victory), and sometimes it's a matter of combining several different approaches (in any of a number of ways) to reach a working whole.

In "Bradley's Nightmare," for example, the key for the Americans can be found in the surprisingly large amount of transport you have available for Air Resupply. This scenario is the shortest in the game, yet you are given more transport than in many

of the larger scenarios. The key to victory? You bet—once you grab Caumont with your forward forces the Axis player (even if it's just the computer) will likely cut you off and surround you. If you don't keep your units in Caumont supplied they'll likely surrender or be eliminated before the scenario is over, and without them holding on to Caumont your chances of any victory are slim (and of major defeat are very good). The many transports you have, however, can act as an "air bridge" to the unit(s) at Caumont; by dropping supplies to them every turn they stand a very good chance of holding out until reinforcements can batter their way through the Axis lines or until the end of the game is reached.

In larger scenarios like "Omaha Beach" there isn't a single supply answer (at least not that I've found), but it is definitely a question that you cannot ignore—leaving your staff to allocate supplies is still an option, but not, it appears, one that will lead you to victory very often. Before pushing forward with the bulk of your forces (like I did in Omaha), consider your truly important objectives (the ones you need to win—the others can either wait for a mop up phase or be ignored). Instead of letting your automatic staff handle the supply allocations, you will have to adjust

The situation at D-Day +1. The shaded areas show the extent of success at Utah Beach and the difficulties at Omaha

things yourself before assaulting these main objectives. Give those headquarters and units that will be (based on their strengths and locations) the spearhead of your attacks the highest levels of supply you can and cut the levels for all your other units (leaving them with enough, however, to defend against unexpected enemy thrusts). At first, move only these units, and leave room behind them for back-field maneuvering. Do not have reinforcements follow closely on the heels of front-line units—if you do, you may end up with a double or

Air supply is critical for maintaining the status of cut-off units. Notice that in this shot I am assigning more than one drop for this unit

triple line, with exhausted front line units unable to move back for rest and refit, and fresh replacements unable to advance because the units they are replacing can't get out of the way.

As you push your assaulting units towards their objectives, keep an eye on both unit cohesion and HQ placement. Unit integrity means you keep units of the same regiment/brigade near each other, giving you an odds modifier in combat and simulating historical practice. The game lets you push the units where you will on the map, and as you advance it is very easy to let related units be split up and moved far enough apart that they can't support each other. Related to but even more important to unit cohesion is HQ placement, both in relation to that HQ's units and to the supply net (either parent HQs or the supply source). Keep your low-level HQs near the front lines (within 12 hexes of assaulting units), and maintain a string of HQs back towards the main HQ (or supply source) for that scenario. As your units advance, advance your HQs, but make certain you don't move them too close to combat operations or block up the roads with them. Also, beware of moving them (or any units, for that matter) near hilltops—if an enemy unit is on the hilltop your HQs will be spotted and will almost assuredly draw fire from artillery or air (especially if you're playing against the computer).

Well, I'm about out of space, so just a few quick concluding items. Consider the road net as you advance—you will need to be your own "traffic cop" in order to keep behind-the-lines traffic moving well (also, beware of road intersections—they often draw barrage fire from the computer, and units sitting there or passing through can really take a pounding). While swampland is often a key defensive terrain, you can also use it to surprise your opponent—over the course of several turns I moved three infantry battalions through the swamp along the Aure (supplying them with air drops) between Axis lines to help surround and capture Isigny.

I hope these tips help get your combat operations going, but remember that because of the complexity of something like **AI** only your "on-the-spot" assessment of and reaction to the situation will actually let you achieve victory. Try your own strategies, learning both from what works and what fails, and eventually you might come up with a style of your own that will have you rivaling the best electronic generals!

Scott Udell

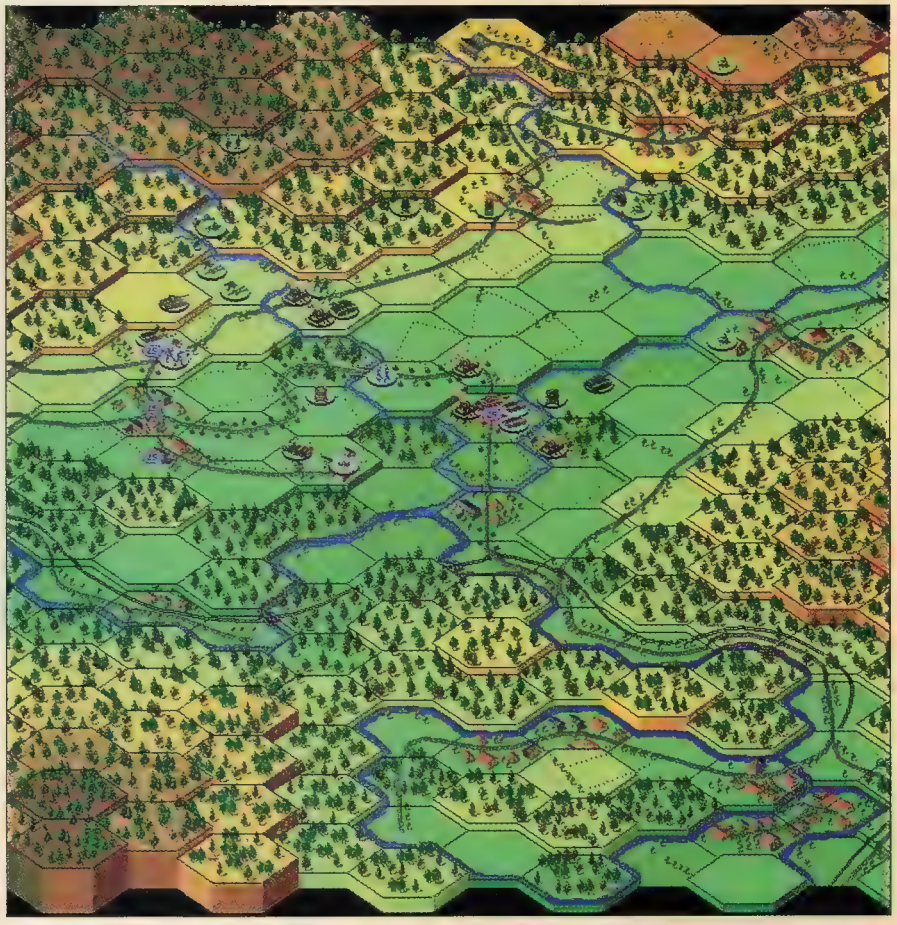
Axis reinforcements start arriving — but will they be enough to stop the American onslaught?

Battleground: Ardennes

Talonsoft's debut game *Battleground: Ardennes* (***BGA***) strikes a balance between hardcore wargames like Avalon Hill's *Stalingrad* and less sophisticated games with a military flavor, like New World's *Empire* series. Much like the now legendary **Panzer General** from *SSI*, ***BGA*** trades off military minutia for accessibility, and provides the essential flavor of wargaming without overwhelming gamers who don't have the benefit (?) of years of boardgaming experience. Still, ***BGA*** is no goldbricker when it comes to delivering tactical challenges. Whatever level of experience you bring to these battles of the Bulge, you will have to develop an effective battle plan in order to win. With ***BGA***, accessible doesn't mean simplistic, and the Ardennes is full of dangers for the unwary general.

Perhaps the first thing to do in ***BGA*** is to look at the map. I mean, *really* look at it. Zoom out until the entire map fits on the screen and get a feel for the overall lay of the land. Then, zoom in to normal view and turn on hex outlines and objectives in the Display menu. Scroll around the map and see where the victory point hexes are. That's where the bulk of your fighting will take place. The rest of the map is either just a way to get to the objectives, or dead space. Center the map around the most crucial objectives, the ones with the most points or the highest concentration of points. Switch to Battleview™ mode, the isometric 3D view that is ***BGA***'s contribution to wargaming history. Look at the terrain around the objectives. Are there good defensive positions? Covered approaches an attacker could use to arrive unscathed? Then, look at the area between the attacker's forces (or where you think they will come from) and the defenders. Can the attacker advance rapidly, or will rough terrain make for a long, slow march? Pay particular attention to the road and rail network. Remember that light bridges can't support vehicles, but foot soldiers will find them highways to your rear areas. And as always, remember that in ***BGA***, high unit density equals slow going, as stacking quickly eliminates any road bonuses.

One other thing that really affects the terrain of your battle is the weather. Right click on an empty hex and look at the weather information at the bottom of the screen. Pay particular attention to sighting distance and ground conditions. How far you can see will set the tone for your battle, and how fast you can move will set the pace. With good visibility and firm ground, battles tend to unfold rapidly, escalate quickly, and favor the side with better long range weaponry, usually the Germans. When the ground is soft and you can't see your nose in front of your face, battles degenerate into halting, chance encounters at close range, where it's easy to find large stacks ripe for artillery salvos and long range weapons lose much of their advantages. This sort of fight favors the Americans in most cases, though the high assault values of many German units will still cause problems. Of course, bad weather means no air power, which hurts the Americans; when there won't be any airstrikes, the German player should consider all those flak units as infantry killers and use them accordingly.



Why not try a frontal assault

Naturally, knowing your troops will prove to be a great benefit in crafting a winning battle plan. So will knowing the enemy. Look at your initial dispositions. If defending, consider moving some units to better positions in order to outflank the attacker; the initial setups are not always optimal. Try not to overstack, but balance your strongpoints with anti-tank and anti-personnel capabilities. Machine-guns can kill light armor at one hex, and infantry types can hold their own against tanks in close assaults if undisrupted, but you will need some sort of heavy AT support as well. Keep AT guns in covered terrain like towns and woods, but preferably not directly on the objective. If sighting range permits, offset your AT guns a hex or so to provide enfilading fire on any attackers approaching the objective; this will also force the attacker to split artillery fires to deal with the AT guns and the forces actually sitting on the objective. In most cases the enemy will try to mount close assaults into your positions, in order to secure the objectives. As disrupted units cannot assault, even light weapons can sometimes prevent heavy armored forces from closing with your defenders. Keep in mind, though, that by the time the enemy gets close enough for your machine guns to fire, it might be too late.

On the attack, prepare your assaults with artillery. Use the heavy stuff for disrupting large stacks. Disrupted units are much less effective, and the occasional retreat or even

kill from your barrages will weaken the enemy that much more. Mortars are great for suppressing heavy weapons and reacting to threats to your flank. Of course, the defender will be doing the same thing to you; unless absolutely necessary, don't bunch up your troops into four unit stacks. Big stacks make the defenders job easier, so try to overwhelm a position with two unit stacks from all directions instead. Practice combined arms warfare, and screen your tanks with your foot soldiers. If sighting permits, the tanks can serve as fire support from two or more hexes back, out of range of light AT weapons, while the infantry advances to the assault. Of course, sometimes only the extra oomph provided by a King Tiger on the assault will do, so be prepared to support such an attack with your best infantry or engineers and lots of suppressive fire. And don't forget smoke; use it to screen your troops in those final yards before the objective.

As a general rule, American units lack the anti-armor strengths the Germans have, making the few really good units like the 90mm AA guns that more valuable. On the other hand, the U.S. artillery is ready to support the G.I.s, and when armor is available it usually shows up in force. Sighting distance is a real key to how you should employ your forces. If you can't see anything beyond two hexes, short range weapons will do the job fine. If twenty hexes is the limit, well, watch out for German tanks, which can torch Shermans from a distance where American armor is ineffective. Both sides have numerous and very vulnerable halftracks and trucks. Trucks are purely for hauling things, and should never be exposed to combat. Halftracks are essentially armored machine gun carriers, and while transport is their primary use they can also provide suppressive fire in a pinch. Keep in mind, however, that a machine gun can kill a halftrack with relative ease, so stay more than one hex away from the bad guys. When in doubt, try the indirect approach; some scenarios can't be won with frontal assaults.

Obscurantism is good for soldiers

In making your attacks, you need to decide what your priorities are. If you are preparing the way for an armored thrust, kill the enemy armor and AT guns first. If you plan to assault a hex, target the enemy units with the highest assault values.

Sometimes you just have to take what you can get, but even then you can be effective. Don't continue with low odds attacks on already disrupted units. If you can't kill it outright, spread your fire around and disrupt as many of the enemy as possible. Nothing slows an attack down like a horde of demoralized foot sloggers who can't advance to the front. As a general rule, armor should attack armor unless there is an enemy infantry unit in position to assault that turn. Don't waste tank fire on distant soft targets if there are possible hard kills in range. And if you get a chance to target enemy artillery, kill it fast; thou shalt not suffer an indirect fire capable unit to live, for surely shall it come back to haunt thee.

Use the map views to your advantage. When maneuvering into position, use the normal view, as it makes it easy to see the big picture. For close in fighting, the Battleview™ is best; not only is it nifty to look at, it really gives you that miniatures feeling and helps illustrate lines of fire. Keep in mind terrain features don't hide units sitting in them; if you have a line of sight to a unit, you will see it (and it you!). You can't hide an AT gun in a building, for example, and ambush someone if the visibility range is 20 hexes.

BGA should be one of the hot games this fall. With a little patience, you too can be adding your name to the Hall of Valor.

Robert Riley Mayer

TYPICAL UNIT VALUES

Unit	Attack	Defense	Range	Morale	VP's	Assault
M4 Sherman	11/8	8	13/13	6	16	6
US Paras	9/6	8	1/4	8	9	5
US Armored Inf.	10/5	6	1/4	6	9	4
King Tiger	24/8	16	20/20	9	25	8
Panther	20/7	11	16/16	7	21	7
PzKw IV	16/7	7	16/16	7	18	6
German Infantry	15/5	7	1/4	7	10	4

Attack and Range values vs. hard/soft targets

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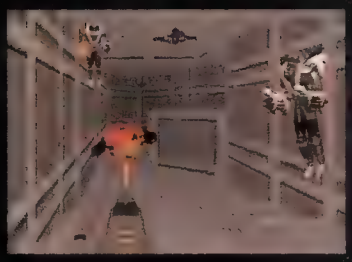

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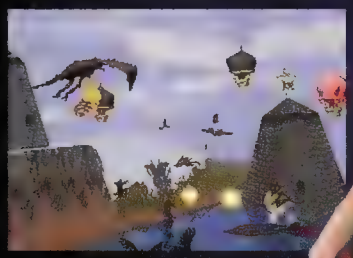

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Heroes of Might & Magic

Beginning game strategy for budding heroes ...

Heroes of Might & Magic (henceforth **Heroes**) is an excellent strategy game in the same vein as the venerable **King's Bounty**. A game of tactics and careful management, **Heroes** lets you play a variety of scenarios or attempt a full-scale campaign. Instead of focusing on the nuances of each individual scenario or part of the campaign (which would require a book instead of a few pages) this article will outline some of the soundest strategies for **Heroes**, and point out some game mechanics that will help you regardless of what scenario you're playing.

Mechanics of the game world

In **Heroes** you take control of several, um... *heroes* who roam the land with their bands of monsters, taking over castles and resources and battling other heroes. Your champions never participate directly in a fight. Rather, their attributes enhance the performance of their armies (i.e. the hero's Defense score is added to his units' defense rating). The hero can also cast spells and make key tactical decisions - like retreating!

The heroes themselves are relatively cheap to "purchase," and you can buy an unlimited number of them at your local castle. As they gain artifacts and experience their ratings increase, and their forces become increasingly powerful. Therefore, remember this: a low-level hero is completely expendable, while a high-level hero should be guarded with care. It takes time to build up a high-level champion, while fresh-faced recruits can always be replaced if you have a couple thousand gold pieces. It's the armies that are hard to replace, not the low-level heroes.

Around the landscape you'll see four basic types of structures and objects: treasures, castles/towns, enemies, and resource-generators like sawmills and mines. Treasures should be picked up if convenient; enemies should be ignored if a fight isn't profitable; and resource-generators should only be captured if it's convenient or necessary. The problem with a sawmill or a mine is that unlike a town or castle, it cannot generate troops to defend itself. If you want to defend it you'll have to keep a hero nearby, but that's a waste of a hero. Instead, capture those buildings when they happen to be nearby and don't worry if they're stolen by enemy players. When you run short of a particular resource like gems, wood or mercury, then go out and recapture the appropriate building.

Towns should always be turned into castles as soon as possible; when you get control of a castle, you should build every single structure that you can (with the possible exception of the Thieves' Guild). Most of these structures produce troops, and you'll soon find that gold is fairly easy to come by – but only a few troops are generated each week, so they're a little harder to accumulate. Therefore you want as many buildings generating troops each week as you can get your hands on. Furthermore, the very last structures you're permitted to build produce the best troops (like Paladins, Dragons or Phoenix). High-level troops are infinitely preferable to low-level units in **Heroes**.

Why is a high-quality unit consisting of a single, 200 hit point Dragon better than a group of 200 Peasants with 1 hit point each? It's inherent in the way combat works. Let's say you send your 200 Peasants into a rough fight and just barely win. You've secured a victory, but you've also lost almost all your Peasants – maybe there's 20 or 30 remaining. Your Peasant army is reduced to a tiny brigade, and is essentially useless. However, let's say that instead you send a single Dragon into that fight. If the Dragon wins the battle it emerges without a scratch, because damage doesn't carry over from battle to battle. So your Dragon is still in great shape, ready for another fight. That's why big, high-toughness creatures are worth your while: they'll stick around for the long haul, and you thus won't have to keep buying replacements.

Aside from their good toughness and attack power, most big creatures have bonuses which make them extra-handy. For example, Hydras attack all adjacent spaces; Trolls regenerate; Dragon and Cyclops attacks span two spaces; Phoenix and Dragons can fly over walls, and have excellent overall mobility.

Beginning game strategy

Your game will often be won or lost based on how you spend your first twenty or so turns. If you are slow to start, your power base will not grow along with those of your enemies; you'll find that even when you defeat the enemy heroes several times over, their superior resources will allow them to rebuild their armies faster than you can destroy them. So plan carefully

This castle is defended by a hero, which makes it considerably tougher

Resources are plentiful here, but don't worry about holding them

when you first start to play!

Here's a formula which has worked pretty well for me in most games:

1. Grab the Loot

You start the game with a single hero. Send him out to circle the castle and pick up any loot that's easy to reach. Capture any buildings that happen to be nearby. Figure out the limits of your surrounding area. Most games start you out in a fairly enclosed locale; if you want to escape, you'll have to kill the monsters guarding mountain passes and paths through the forest.

While your hero is looking and exploring, you should make sure to build a new structure in your castle every single turn. Don't forget and waste a turn. Almost all buildings are useful, but if your hero has poor spell power (i.e. he or she is a Knight or Barbarian) you can save the Mages' Guild for last. Ignore the Thieves Guild completely.

2. Put Together an Expeditionary Force

Once your hero has investigated the immediate locale, he should return to the castle and get as many creatures as he can from the newly built structures in the castle. Yes, this leaves your castle open to attack, but in most scenarios you have a little time before the enemy gets close. Obviously, if you start out with bad guys swarming all around you, you'll need to leave a garrison at the castle.

The hero should now take his newly formed army and destroy the weakest monsters in the immediate area, like hordes of Peasants and Pikemen. Target the monsters who guard artifacts and treasures. When you find treasure chests, by the way, it's almost always best to distribute the gold for experience points instead of keeping it: remember, gold isn't that hard to come by.

If you can help it, don't attack the creatures who guard paths into or out of your little area. Leave them there for now – they'll act as a buffer to deter enemy units for a while.

You should still be building up your castle; at this point, you'll have almost every building. The very best buildings sometimes require resources you don't have, like Mercury or Crystals. Remember which resources you need and keep an eye out for buildings that produce them.

3. Restock the Army and Roll Out

Send your hero back to the castle. Some more troops should have been generated by this time, so give 'em all to the hero and send him away (once again, if enemy units are nearby, leave a garrison). Create a new hero to guard the castle: a castle without a hero has a tough time warding off attackers; the mere presence of a hero (even a low-level one) tends to discourage attacks.

Your older, experienced hero should now start to explore the territory farther away from your starting castle. If he can explore overland, by all means have him do so.

The main concern here is to conquer another town or castle. This provides you with both another source of revenue and another source of troops. If you fail to acquire a new castle in the early stages of the game, you'll have an extremely hard time matching your enemies' armies later on. So snag that new castle, and if you capture a town instead, make sure to turn it into a castle as soon as possible.

4. Fortify the New Castle

Your experienced hero should now sit at the new castle until you've repeated the building process you just completed (or nearly completed) at the old castle. Leave him there to guard the place until you have constructed as many buildings as possible and created a decent-sized garrison to defend it, and maybe give the hero some fresh units for his army. When the new castle has been thoroughly fortified and garrisoned, the experienced hero can then leave once again for more exploration. At your discretion, you may now purchase a third hero to sit and guard the new castle.

5. Gather Supplies and Continue Expanding

Now your experienced hero can continue to explore, take over new castles, and take over new supplies. You'll find that wood and ore – especially wood – run short as the game goes on, because so many buildings require those elements. Take over mines and sawmills whenever possible, as well as any miscellaneous resources you might need.

Eventually your older castles will build up big enough garrisons that they no longer need their heroes to defend them. At that point the heroes defending the castles are free to roam the countryside and explore, conquer cities, and recover artifacts. Make sure to keep bolstering your old garrisons and you'll be well on your way to victory.

A Final Note

A final bit of strategy involves the options menu. Make sure to leave "View Enemy Movement" enabled, and leave heroes' movement at a fairly slow speed so you can really see what the bad guys are up to. That way you'll know immediately when your castles are under-fortified, because the minute your heroes leave you will see enemy troops making a bee-line for them. Good luck!

Joe Grant Bell

A veteran hero gets big Attack and Defense bonuses, plus tons of artifacts!

Command & Conquer — base assaults

GDI FM 100-56, App. A2, Transcript 2

Introduction

All right, ladies and gentlemen, you know why we're here. While our fight against the Brotherhood of Nod has seen some progress, the situation is still tenuous; we've got a lot of work left before we can claim peace is again the *status quo*. In the last GDI Veteran Lecture Series, I spoke about base design and defense; this time I'll be turning the coin to talk about the hardest, most grueling mission you'll face when going up against Nod—base assaults.

Nod bases are usually well laid out, in defensive terrain with few access points, and are heavily defended. Often even cutting off Nod access to Tiberium is not enough to dry a base up; the Brotherhood holds such an overwhelming amount of Tiberium world-wide that individual base commanders often have an excess of funding available to purchase and fly-in new weapons, material, and troops. A simple siege may not be enough; a direct assault is thus often your only option.

Of course, our missions tend to vary widely, both in objectives and resources, so there is no "right" way to hit a base each time. Before charging into a particular situation, take stock: is your primary mission to assault the base, or is it to protect something else? In your assault, do you need to take or destroy the whole base, or just a portion of it? Perhaps you need to perform a "snatch-and-grab" of something (or someone) in the base. What are your forces? Are you using regular troops, engineers, commandos, vehicles, and/or long-range weaponry? Are you operating from (and do you need to defend) a base of your own?

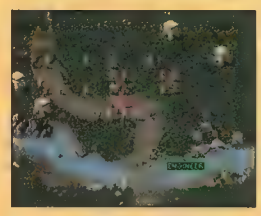
What about the enemy setup? Do you know where the Nod base is? What are the approaches? Defensive emplacements? Troops strengths? Where are the Tiberium fields Nod is harvesting, and can you interdict them? Can Nod air-drop troops behind your lines? *Is there more than one Nod base?* Worst of all, might this Nod base be one containing some of the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) our intelligence has gotten hints of?

Survey the situation

Before you can even begin to think about sending a major assault force towards a base, you need to gather information on it. First, you must pinpoint its location in your area of operations (this is not a trivial task in rugged terrain). You'll need to scout out at least one path (ideally more) from your base/beachhead to the Nod facility. Probe around the perimeter of the base. Find out what avenues of approach exist, where its entrances are, and what and where its perimeter defenses are. In this phase try to avoid combat; you want to send your scouts in and out without attracting attention.

If your scouts are discovered, *don't* extract them back in the direction of your base/beachhead; you don't want to draw Nod's attention down on you yet. Instead, have them pull away to another part of the area of operations (ideally an area you haven't explored yet; they can always look for other Nod facilities, Tiberium deposits, or even a "backdoor" approach to the Nod base).

For this phase, you should only use two or three troops or light vehicles. While something like a Hum-vee may be much faster, it is also more likely to attract Nod's attention. Most likely you'll be using Minigun or Grenade infantry troops. They're faster than the others and, to put it simply, more expendable. If you're very lucky you'll have been assigned one of our rare commandos (although if you have a commando he's probably also your assault force, so keep him away from vehicles and gun emplacements). Once your forces have scouted the perimeter (avoiding the interior for now, otherwise you'll stir up the Nod forces) you can either send them to scout other portions of the area of operations or just pull them back a bit to keep an eye on Nod movements (especially if you don't have a comm center built) and to provide an initial "speed bump" against premature Nod aggression.



Top: **If you have airborne assault resources, use them, but watch out for NOD SAM sites!** *Middle:* **A major assault force forming up. Notice the placement of the Engineers safely behind the main body of the force, and the use of Guard Towers to protect the assault force from a counter-attack from the rear.** *Bottom:* **Commandos can scout wider swatches of territory than anything else you have, and are excellent at destroying buildings; however, they are rare so don't get your hopes up**

The buildup

As you are scouting the Nod base, you should be preparing your assault force(s). If you don't have a base with which to train/build new forces, your build-up options are limited. You may get reinforcements, but you can't always rely on this possibility. If you're without a base, but are still expected to capture or destroy the Nod base, you'll be given engineer troops. These units are critical, so protect them! Arrange your assault force so that such weak-but-important forces (missile launchers also fit into this category) are preceded into the assault by more mobile, defensible, and/or expendable units. If you do have a base, don't expend all your funds building an assault force before your scouting is done; save funds for the end of the scouting phase, in case the scouts discover a new threat at the last minute.

If you can, position your forces to assault from more than one direction at once. Look for areas that are near the base but which can't access it directly, due to terrain obstructions or barriers; you can position medium/long-range forces (like Rocket infantry or missile launchers) here. If you have them, consider using transport helicopters to move forces in behind the Nod base, but beware of getting too close to a base with SAM sites!

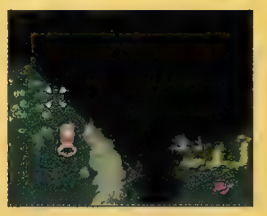
The assault

Consider your assault: should it be in waves, or in one massive push? If you're performing a "snatch 'n' run" mission, you'll only need to penetrate the base once, but you'll need to make a fighting withdrawal; you *may* need to assign forces to cover your backside. These are the kind of missions where you're most likely to get a commando assigned to your force (in fact, you may have *only* a commando).

Commandos can take out individual troops at great distances, usually with one shot. They can blow up weapons emplacements and major buildings easily, but they are also vulnerable to concerted attacks by enemy vehicles. If you have airpower assigned to you, use it against the base (especially if the base has an Obelisk of Light, or nukes); watch out for those SAM sites, though.

Long-range, powerful weapons like the Obelisk of Light can be the death of an assault; you might consider taking out the more vulnerable power generation facilities they rely on.

Of course, your mission may not require you to actually destroy or occupy a whole base; in mission's like this "snatch 'n' run" a small, fast assault force can do the trick.



It is critical that you scout out the approaches and extents of the Nod base before assaulting it. Learn the terrain around it and the location of its outer defensive emplacements

The more advanced the Nod weapons emplacements, the more power they need. Taking out several power generation plants may be enough to cripple the Nod base. Often these power generation facilities are located towards the rear of a Nod base, behind weapons emplacements and protected from direct assault by barriers, terrain, and/or the edge of the operations area. If you can, punch a hole in the barriers (using Grenade/Rocket infantry and or tanks/missile launchers) so you can insert a secondary force to attack these vulnerable facilities.

Three critical types of facilities are the Fists of Nod, the Airstrips, and the Construction Yard. The order that you capture/destroy these depends on the situation at the time of the assault. If the Nod commander is producing waves of infantry, try taking out the Fists; if your force is short on vehicles with which to take on new Nod vehicles, take out the Airstrip(s). His construction yard can be particularly important. Take that out and he can't reconstruct his buildings and weapons emplacements. If you are to capture the base intact, make certain you first take out his ability to produce new troops/receive new vehicles (but be ready to follow up quickly with an assault on his construction yard!). If capture doesn't matter, destroy or sell off the buildings as soon as you capture them (and don't waste your expensive Engineers on such cheap facilities as Power Plants (unless you need to take it out quickly).

One thing to be aware of is that the enemy likes to rebuild facilities in the same spot over and over. If you sell a building you've captured, place a unit or sandbag wall on the empty terrain to prevent him from doing so. While it may be tempting to take out his Tiberium Refinery, it's not critical; often Nod has so much other revenue that a base commander won't likely miss the Tiberium (in the short-run); instead, it is easier for you to assault his Harvesters when they are away from the base. If you *must* capture a Tiberium refinery, do it while the harvester is unloading. In this way you'll capture both the refinery and the harvester in one swoop.

Special AI weaknesses

As you know, because of a shortage of senior commanders and apparent advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) technology, both Nod and GDI have developed computer-commanded bases. Ironically, both sides seem to have the same set of weaknesses in the AI they've developed, so while you'll want to use the following information for your own benefit, you must do all you can to keep it from falling into enemy hands.

For some reason, the AI commanders are loathe to breach even sandbag obstacles. Because of this, if your mission has you commanding a GDI base with the capability to produce barriers you can use this Nod weakness to keep his forces away from your base, and even bottled up in areas of your choosing. Build a barrier (use sandbags; they're cheapest and easiest to build and they work) towards the Nod base (remember, you always need to build a facility – even a sandbag barrier – next to another GDI facility; of course, once you've built two or three in a row you can start selling of the ones at the start of the line, effectively "leap-frogging" a wall towards the Nod base).

You can keep the AI from crossing rivers by leaving a sandbag in the middle of a ford; you can build a wall across a valley entrance to keep him from coming down an avenue of approach; you can even build a wall across the entrance to his base! Whatever you do, the AI commander won't intentionally undo (secondary explosions during combat may accidentally breach a wall for him, so be on the lookout for this). If you block a point that your forces will need to use, don't worry; you can always just sell of some of the bags, let your forces through, and then plug the hole. One trick is to build a wall near his base, blocking in all his troops. Then, build a second line of fortifications just out of range of his defenses (sandbags first, then guard towers and troops/vehicles). Sell off one of the sandbags in the line nearest his base; his pent-up troops will stream out, right into the crossfire of your guardtowers (for infantry) and your troops/vehicles (for vehicles). Of course, if he has long-range WMD like the Obelisk of Light or nuclear missiles this assault tactic won't work, but you can still block him in with sandbags.

Another weakness of the AI (and inexperienced human) commanders is an overreaction to assaults on his Tiberium harvesters. If you hit his harvester with just a minigunner, he'll tend to send most of his mobile forces to its defense, leaving his base with only fixed defenses (and these, if they are in range of the units assaulting the harvester, may ignore everything else as well). You can even combine these two weaknesses: use sandbags to block-in his harvester away from his base. Then, hit it with a weak unit (i.e., don't destroy his harvester – if you do, the AI reassigns his forces), and wait while he sends his mobile forces far away from his base, leaving it open to your main assault force.

Conclusion

Well, that's it folks. As always, time is precious, so I'll be letting you return to your commands. I hope you've found the material we've covered today useful; more than that, I wish you good luck, straight shooting, and a safe journey through to the end of our conflict.

Commander Scott Udell

the tankers' wargaming & military history home page
http://www.webspace.com/~tanker/

This home page will be a welcome addition to many wargamers' hotlists. It's a great resource for true wargame enthusiasts, featuring reviews and discussion of computer wargames, and more.

Computer simulations are reviewed without screenshots or graphic emphasis, but the reviews themselves are extremely detailed, explaining exactly what to expect from each product. You might want to check out this page before making any new wargame purchases, or look here for some hints on which older wargames to snatch out of the bargain bin.

In addition to the computer gaming material there's information on board wargames, military history, and war films. These extra resources make the Tankers' page a fun place to kick around and do a little reading. — jgb

unofficial perfect general II home page
www.intersource.com/~boyken/pg2.htm

This graphically Spartan page is host to a wealth of information about **The Perfect General II**, a popular (though not so recent) wargame. You'll find several things here you probably wouldn't expect from a home page: sure, there's the requisite FAQ, but there's also information on the companies responsible (directly and indirectly) for bringing us **The Perfect General II**, as well as a list of **Perfect General** reviews (one or two of which are reproduced in their entirety).

There's also some interesting information on playing **Perfect General II** over **IHHD**, the Internet Head to Head Daemon (a substitute for direct modem-to-modem gaming that uses the Internet for 2 player games). Aside from a link to the **IHHD** home page there's useful information on what the maintainer had to go through to make **IHHD** work on his own computer. Since **IHHD** is a temperamental and somewhat tricky piece of software, this sort of personal account is a welcome addition to the home page.

Finally, there's a short list of gamers who like to play **The Perfect General II** over **IHHD**, just in case you actually get the thing to work! Good luck.... — jgb

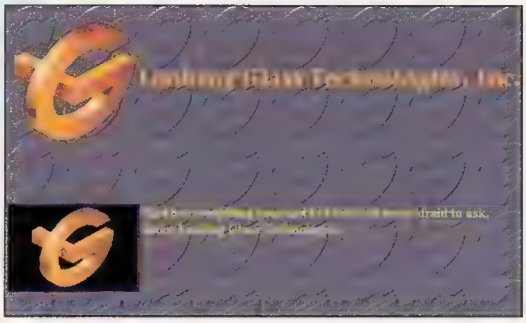
looking glass technologies home page
http://www.tiac.net/users/lglass

Looking Glass Technologies is a company which really likes to dig beneath the surface of games. Most companies are primarily interested in finding the quickest means to a graphically appealing end product; *Looking Glass* is very interested in creating game worlds which obey the same natural laws as the real world. Just take a look at the current job openings at *Looking Glass* and you'll see proof of this interest in real-world mechanics: they're looking for a Senior Physics Programmer. There aren't many companies that would bother with a Senior Physics Programmer, or even a junior one for that matter... they'd just want someone who could create a quick impression that their game contains some semblance of realistic physics.

The upcoming titles advertised on this home page reinforce the notion of real-life game mechanics. **Terra Nova**, a first-person, 3-D action/strategy game, will try to bring a new level of realism to small-unit combat, something that is definitely missing in the arcadish slugfests of post-**Doom** gaming.

Terra Nova promises "life-like character models simulated in real time using unique dynamic physics" and "intelligent team members and opponents, based on a sophisticated artificial intelligence design model, that carry out mission orders and adapt to changing battle environments...." Sound familiar? Lots of strategy game designers boast similar features in their products, but do the products themselves bear out the claims, that's the test. Most game worlds lack *any* sort of physics model; almost every computer game ever made is grievously lacking in the artificial intelligence department. To take a very recent example, **Command & Conquer** is a great strategy game, but you can defeat the computer opponent just by surrounding its base with sandbags: the little enemy tanks and grenadiers simply stand frozen inside their base, never realizing that they could blast away the sandbag wall and run out to attack you. The game is fun despite these shortcomings, but the lacking AI does very little to enhance the player's involvement.

The bottom line, then, is that we'll watch for these two new titles from *Looking Glass*, and hope they make good on the promise of better-than-average physics and AI. And if they succeed, we hope the rest of the industry catches on! — jgb



net stream
on-line news

TEN, the **Total Entertainment Network**, was previously scheduled to be up and running sometime this year. Combining a slick graphical interface with compelling games and a decidedly more hip feel than the on-line Candyland setting of the **ImagiNation Network**, **TEN** was supposed to bring on-line gaming to new heights. Earlier this year the system was in the late beta stage, and it looked fantastic: the graphics were smooth, the games were great, and the interface was fantastic. Now, however, **TEN** is nowhere to be seen. Slightly worried, we called 'em up and discovered that no, they're not dead, they're just porting everything to run under Windows '95. The original version of **TEN** was a DOS-only product, but now that the future of DOS-based applications looks uncertain (at best), they decided to overhaul the code completely before releasing it to the general public. The system should be up and running in beta mode by November; hopefully the commercial debut will be soon to follow. We'll keep you posted...

CompuServe will be joining **Prodigy** by allowing users to create their own World Wide Web home page... In other **CompuServe** news, **Atari** has named them their official on-line service... **MGM** is creating an on-line, multi-player version of **The Outer Limits**

an overview of what's new on **mpgn**

The *Multi-Player Games Network* (*MPGN*) was one of the first on-line services devoted entirely to entertainment. For the most part, other networks try to appeal to a more broad-based audience, throwing a few games into the mix in hopes of luring the gaming crowd on board as well. This has mixed results; success is largely dependent on the games that are offered: in the case of *GEnie* it works fairly well, because the games (**CyberStrike, Hundred Years War**) are extremely well-designed and engaging. In the case of other services like *CompuServe*, however, the games are little more than an afterthought.

MPGN recently switched from a text-based menu interface to a fully graphic interface, and along with the facelift it started to offer a variety of new games. Has it changed for the better? Let's take a look at the revamped *MPGN* and see what it has to offer.

different from the rest

Each on-line service has a distinct look and feel, and *MPGN* is no exception. It is more coherent than *GEnie*, where you're forced to jump back and forth between a confusing text interface and graphical game worlds - an extremely dislocating process. *MPGN* also offers more fully articulated, graphical games, whereas *GEnie* has several older text-based games and only a few graphics-based new ones. *MPGN* would have it all over *GEnie* except that it doesn't feature any action games, while *GEnie* offers the highly popular **CyberStrike** for action-oriented gamers.

When comparing *MPGN* with *NovaLink*, a small but growing on-line service, it's impossible not to compare *NovaLink*'s flagship game, **Legends of Future Past**, with *MPGN*'s **Kingdom of Drakkar**. Both games are fantasy role-playing epics with constantly-changing game worlds and potentially hundreds of players. **Legends** is text-based, however, while **Drakkar** features graphics similar to those of **Ultima VI** - though with some inevitable pauses in the action. Once you get beyond the flagship games you'll find that *MPGN* has more to offer. Still, there is one caveat: *NovaLink*'s **CyberCorps**, while not a pure action game, is a real-time slugfest with tactical elements that will satisfy some gamers' lust for carnage, while *MPGN* has no equivalent.

The ImagiNation Network and the forthcoming *TEN* (*Total Entertainment Network*) are devoted entirely to recreation. Whether you prefer *INN*, *TEN* or *MPGN* largely boils down to the games themselves (more on *ImagiNation* in a forthcoming article). *TEN* might have the slickest interface of all, but it isn't fully operational yet (a big minus), while *INN* might be a little too cartoonish for some tastes.

what about the new stuff?

Aside from **Drakkar**, there are several new offerings on *MPGN*. Some of these games are currently available, while others are yet to come. New titles that you can play right now include **Empire Builder** (a railroad tycoon game) **Operation Market-Garden** (based on a W.W.II board game), **FiefQuest** (a game of medieval kingdom-building), **Minion Hunter** (a strategy title based in a dark future) and **Imperium** (an interstellar conquest game for two players). We'll review these titles in depth in forthcoming issues.

Future games include **Warlords of the Apocalypse**, **Junta** and **Starweb**, three promising new strategy titles.

As previously mentioned, the interface itself is also new. It's point-and-click, and it allows you to talk with several other players simultaneously, build a complex face for your on-line character, and exchange "NetCards" with other users. NetCards are like on-line business cards with your character's customized name, face and coat-of arms (also customizable). Everyone gets a virtual rolodex to store these in, so if you forgot who you were talking to last night you can just look 'em up, then fire off some e-mail with equal ease. It's an interesting system, initially a little overwhelming ("Hey, enough with the cards!") but it definitely grows on you.

You can customize your face in this area

My overall impression of the new interface was initially negative, but over time I came to like it. Since it's icon-driven, nothing is labeled, and there are lots of different options, there is a bit of a learning curve when you first log on. Comparing it to *TEN*'s seamless interface, it's somewhat cumbersome. However, the new look is undeniably attractive and it seems slightly more versatile than *TEN*'s interface, so I pronounce it a winner - certainly in the same class as *TEN*, and light-years beyond the arcane keywords of *GEnie*.

Talk with other players on-line with this easy-to-use interface

Over the next few months we'll look *MPGN*'s new games in depth. The bottom line for now, however, is that anyone looking for a network that's serious about games should definitely consider *MPGN*. Like other commercial networks it's quite expensive ($4.00/hr direct dial or $2.00/hr over the Internet) but if you like multi-player games - especially strategy games - you'll find a lot to offer on *MPGN*. Call 'em at 1-800-GET-GAME for more information.

— jgb

Here's the new main lobby of MPGN. Nice, eh?

the air warrior conference

Do you really want to know what is going on with World War II flight simulators? Go to the **Air Warrior** Conference. The arguably best and brightest flight simulator experts appeared in an informal setting, including Bob Shaw, author of *Fighter Combat*, Kelton Flinn (one of the originators of *Kesmai* **Air Warrior**), Blue Baron (Johnathon Baron of *Kesmai*) and Wild Bill Stealey of *Interactive Magic*. You hear more whispers of what is really going on behind the scenes in four days than you usually do in six months. Trends suddenly become clear. Let us look at the con, what happened there, and new flight simulator developments!

The conference took place from Thursday, October 19, to Sunday, October 22 at the Wyndham Hotel in Houston, Texas. **Air Warrior** players organized and ran the con. One large room was set up with connecting tables in the shape of a large square for computers, displays, meetings and hanging out. Another smaller room had special presentations. Included during the con were an air show, a head to head tournament, a never-before-seen (by most game players at least!) air to air\ground video footage presentation on Operation Desert Storm by Lt. Col. Tim DesMarais (Ret), an air to air tactics presentation *by Fighter Pilots USA* (also by Desmarais), a sit-down awards banquet, and many light meals.

Players played the *Kesmai* **Air Warrior** online flight simulation for free and against each other. What were these air warriors like as people? The answer is, – just like you and me. Some were students, others construction people, doctors, computer consultants, business people, US Air Force test pilots, US military people, civilian pilots, programmers, teens, people in their sixties, women...you name it! When someone asked the front desk clerk what was unusual about this group...her reply was that they were all so different! Some stayed up late, partied, played CRUD and had lots of beers. Some went to bed early. The only things they seemed to share in common were a love of air combat simulations. Most knew each other from previous **Air Warrior** online playing. However, they were very receptive to helping newcomers out as well. As a result, you heard much animated talk of combat airplanes, tactics and future personal computer air combat developments. What was new?

AW Con group photo

Can you hear the yells and screams? !!!

Wild Bill Stealey of *Interactive Magic* announced that *Interactive Magic* was going to be releasing the boxed version of **Air Warrior.** This gives *Kesmai* broad access to the gaming market. People who have played the boxed version's artificial intelligence (AI) state that it has by far the best AI ever seen, and that it does not even cheat! What is *Kesmai* doing?

Kesmai showed their new **Air Warrior** interface. It had many rooms at an airfield building, with simple point and click access and attractive artwork. For new aircraft art work, *Kesmai* had a Mustang. Taken from actual photos, it captured the rough and functional feeling of a World War II fighter very effectively. **Air Warrior** is definitely headed for the mass market. This means introducing as many newcomers to **Air Warrior** as possible. Blue Baron stated that *Kemai* will keep pushing realism/accuracy in spite of the mass market focus. For *Kesmai* flight model news, *Kesmai* is busy. Jonathan stated that next year, **Air Warrior** will have a new flight model. They have been holding out for a good one, according to Jonathan. Who else was there?

Prime Systems's PC cockpits

CH Products, of course, was present displaying their solid, quality joysticks and peripherals, as was *Thrustmaster* (whose equipment most people at the con were using). *ICI* people also attended, and kept a low profile in order not to overshadow the con. *Domark* stated that they are going to have a competitive flight simulator, using a current USAF 6-degree-of-freedom force model for their new flight model. *Domark* claims it will have excellent, realistic aerodynamic and engine modeling. The graphics engine is coded in assembler and is claimed to be 30% faster than the one premiered in **Flight Sim Toolkit**. It is planned to have full texture-mapping and Gouraud shading built in. A new company – *Statlock Enterprises* (comprised of **Air Warrior** players) – showed up as well. They were selling massive amounts(50,000 pages already, they claim) of undiscovered (until now) WWI and WWII, and Korean War test flight data. For many years simulation companies have been guessing or hedging on aircraft performance. With this new company, this is no longer necessary. Flight simulation fans can only benefit by all these changes!

While the **Air Warrior** con didn't have any startling new revelations, it did in any event make it clear that modeling WWII air combat remains a serious proposal for a number of different groups out there. Right now, *Kesmai*'s own efforts, and *I-Magic*'s boxed **Air Warrior** look like the most imminent (and inevitable) projects in this genre. The con also made clear that there are a *lot* of fans of this subject and this medium, and that they're good people. Treat 'em right, folks. — ro

contributors
joe grant bell
richard orway

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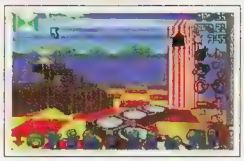

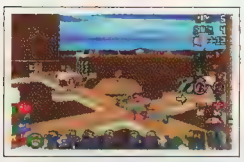

PC Gamer Editor's Choice
"Every bit as clever as the original" – *Game Players*
"An immersive, satisfying and original experience" – *Ultimate Gamer*
"The only complaint I have is that I wish I had more time to play the game...3D Lemmings is a winner" – *Electronic Gaming Monthly*
(Editor's Choice Gold)

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Reader Service No. 109

Linearity, or just tell me what to do next

While sitting around trying to figure out how I could somehow sneak another reference to **Sam & Max** into an article, the world stopped for a moment. During October, a man spoke, and millions listened. There was much rejoicing in certain parts of the communities of the world, while others just shook their heads.

You, of course, know exactly what I'm talking about. People have been talking about it ever since, debating what it all means to the world. The man – Robert

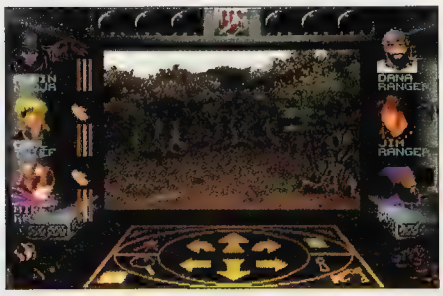
Not another Phantasmagoria column...

Sirotek of *Sir-tech*. The announcement – there will be a new **Wizardry** role-playing game, and a **Wizardry** adventure as well. The adventure will be out in 1996, while the CRPG will be out in late '96 or early '97.

On another note, I received a call from *Sierra* the other day and they were apparently upset about the review of **Phantasmagoria** that appeared in the November issue of *Strategy Plus*. It wasn't the fact that it was negative, they said, but rather that they had a problem because the tone of the article was needlessly cruel and snotty.

And they're right. And I apologize for the tone. However, I stand by the criticisms pointed out in the review. Also, *Sierra* indicated that, despite my claims otherwise, no mood music occurs when the heroine, Adrienne, checks her hair and makeup. I was juxtaposing the fact that the mood music was overused with the fact that your character spends an inordinate amount of time playing with her hair. As they suggested, however, a lot of the backstory for the game (and the "horror" elements in the game) come through visions seen in the various mirrors, thus justifying Adrienne's vanity.

Which brings up a rather weird thing about the game. There is a lot of backstory that many gamers (myself included) probably haven't seen. I'm not sure if this is a good thing, to make these things periphery to the main design and unnecessary, but oddly enough it's what gamers



The warmup for the next Wizardry – Wizardry Gold

Daggerfall – so release it already!

(again, myself included) have asked for since adventures went graphic. It's that sense of not being held to a single path – that elusive thing called "non-linearity." In that regard, **Phantasmagoria** is fairly non-linear, because you can choose to wander around most of the game and take in the sights, despite the fact that in order to advance the plot you have to do things in a set order. It's all about the perception of linearity, and let's face it – is a non-linear game even remotely possible, or more importantly, desirable?

Which brings us to a game that was fairly non-linear – *Bethesda's* **The Elder Scrolls: Arena**. You could pretty much wander the countryside, ignoring the main plot. Occasionally you would find a castle or town and cruise around in it, talking to the denizens, fighting a few monsters here and there. The problem I had with that game was that I felt I needed *more* direction if I wanted to actually progress in the story. Sure, I could run around hacking and slashing and building up a character. That to me isn't what these things are all about – I've always been more interested in the story the designer has to tell.

Which is where the problem with a non-linear game comes in. A story needs to be moved along, otherwise the player will either forget what's happened or what they're supposed to be doing (this is something I always have a problem with) or they'll just get bored and erase the thing off of their hard drive.

Anticipating **Daggerfall**, the follow-up to **Arena**, I fired **Arena** up and started playing it again. Once again I managed to get started in the game, only to hit a wall where I just wasn't sure where to go or what to do. If I hit this point in an adventure game (and I always do), there are usually only a few locations to cover to try and get on track. With **Arena**, though, there's this *huge* world out there, with details I'll never see, and trying to find little bits of information can be as tough as finding something useful on the World Wide Web.

I'm curious how **Daggerfall** handles this problem – though it must be pointed out that many **Arena** fans didn't think that this was indeed a problem. In fact, that was what many hardcore CRGers *loved* about **Arena**. Regardless, **Daggerfall** is on the top of my current "release the damn thing so I can play it already!" list.

Steve Bauman

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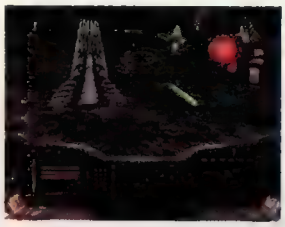

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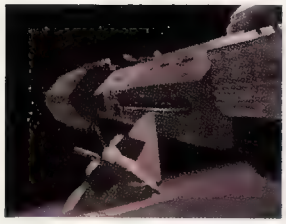

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Check out the action at *http://www.ea.com/easudios.html*

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Reader Service No. 44

Ol'Unca Andy's mythical Inn and spell of last resort for solving adventure puzzles. If all else fails, just re-boot ! Heh-heh...

"Relax, kid. I'm the Kingdom Magician, not its General

Eh up matey (according to Ian Sabine that's a typical Yorkshireman's greeting)!

Excuse all the crepe! We've been celebrating Bashed's recent promotion.

He's now the Guildmaster of the Thieves Guild in ***Mordor****. The rest of us (Battered, Bewildered and I) are quite envious. It looks like Battered will soon be promoted to Guildmaster of the Nomad Guild and I'll be Guildmaster of the Seekers. But, for the present, only Bashed has the honor of wearing the guild's crest. Congratulations, Bashed. ASCII ale on the house (yes, you have to climb the roof to get it)!*

Bashed has changed a great deal since I first met him in ***Pool of Radiance****. One of my party's NPCs died. Bashed suggested we strip him of his armor and throw his body in a ditch. Look, he heard me! He's blushing. Heh-heh.*

"Play Misty for me." An idle moment in Phantasmagoria

Gabriel Knight cleverly suffocates a vampire with the game's title screen

The future's so bright, I gotta wear shades!

My plate is full. I can't complain about having nothing to play this past month. I've been playing and enjoying several adventures including **Mordor, Thunderscape, Dungeon Master II, Phantasmagoria, Kingdom** and also **MechWarrior 2** and **Perfect General II** for those of you who think I only play adventures. And there's more coming!

I'm waiting eagerly for **Gabriel Knight 2**. The demo looks marvelous and Jane Jensen is a wonderful game designer who knows how to fully develop characters. **Daggerfall** (the second **Elder Scrolls** CRPG) may be the best CRPG of the year, if it lives up to its hype.

I'm also playing the strategy games **Command & Conquer** and **Empire II**. I'm even ordering **Apache** because Steve Wartofsky recommends it so highly.

What's in, what's spin

Thunderscape is the most popular CRPG of the month. It's much larger than **Dungeon Master II**. Although I enjoyed playing **DM2**, it only takes about a week to play it. **Thunderscape** in spite of its horrendous automap is the better buy. I still highly recommend **Mordor**, in spite of its lack of graphics, character interaction and plot. It's the most addicting CRPG I've played in years (and my sources tell me that character interaction and plot will be added to future upgrades and sequels of **Mordor**).

A new shareware CRPG for Windows just popped up on *CompuServe* (GO WINFUN), called **Exile**. If Mordor reminds me of **Wizardry**, **Exile** plays (and looks) like the early **Ultimas** (before the Avatar nonsense). I just started it, so I don't know enough about it to recommend it or not, but the feedback I've read from other gamers is positive.

Phantasmagoria was easily the most played adventure of the month, and most controversial.

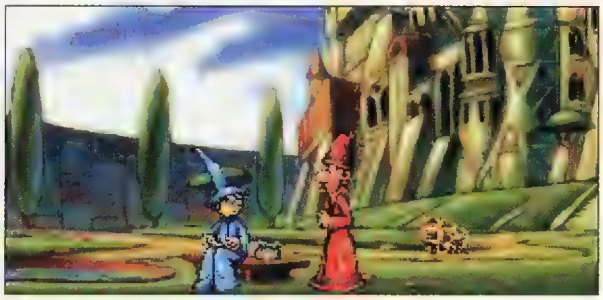
Gamers either love it or hate it. **Buried in Time** is still perhaps the best puzzle adventure of the year, even though it won't seem like it if you only have a 486/33 or less.

The most disappointing release for me this year has been **Lords of Midnight**. I haven't given up on it yet, but what I've played so far has been very confusing. It's not a CRPG, it's more of a strategy game, but I'm not real sure what it is – outside of not being very much fun to play so far. There are far too many characters for me to keep track of and I don't understand the control character interface. It's much easier to watch. But, maybe it'll grow on me. I was put off by the lack of graphics in **Mordor** at first, heaven knows.

From beyond the pail

Scott T. Wilson writes: I am one of the folks enjoying ***Discworld*** *immensely. It is my first foray into computer gaming since my Commodore 64 days (whew!). Anyway, I have a rather silly question... how do I get out of the University?*

That's not a silly question. But this is a silly answer. Graduate? Heh-heh. No, Scott,



Question the Apprentice in Discworld to get out of the University

the real answer is to ? the apprentice. Literally. The question mark symbol appears as one of the dialogue options. Use it, pick up the frog, then open the gate.

Ian Canino writes: You haven't included the [Internet] site to get **Mordor** *(I believe it is shareware).*

You noticed that, eh? Well, you win the no-prize of the month, Ian. In the future I'll include Internet addresses for shareware (if available). I usually get my Shareware from Gamers on *CompuServe*, but here are a few other addresses: ftp.pht.com; ftp.cdrom.com and www.happypuppy.com /games/link/backyard. Your no-prize will be sent no-mail, no-stamp, no-delivery first thing in the no-morning.

Josho: I just read your Space Quest VI *review. Boy, am I confused. Is Slosho Benjo some sort of an anagram?*

Unca: Josho, Slosho Benjo is a tribute to your hilarious writings in **Janitronics** (a *Sierra* magazine parody packaged with the game). Benjo is Japanese for a type of commode, a word featured in several of the **Janitronics** articles.

Josho: Thanks (I think). Josho Benjo.

Peeve of the Month

So many games to play and not enough time to play them. On the other hand, I'm getting less and less fond of the shorter and shorter length of time it takes to play an adventure anymore. Many of them can be played in a single afternoon, nowadays! Arggggghhh!!! Talk about not getting your money's worth!

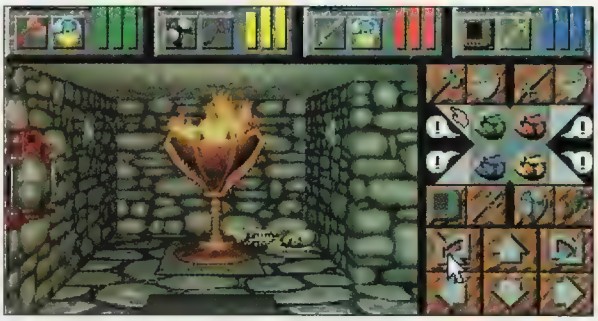
Read the fine print and you'll see that I found this Mordor beauty first!

Phantasmagoria is another in the Wow! series (wow-what-graphics-wow-what-a-short-game)! You could spend the weekend with both **Phantasmagoria** and **Full Throttle** and still have time for a dinner and Theatre date Saturday and Sunday nights and watch football each afternoon, too.

Dungeon Master II

To find Dragoth, once you're through the dimensional portal, activate the Scout map and go south to the moving walkway. Cast accelerate and go across. Also cross a second walkway to meet all 1,500 hitpoints of *The Foozle*. I asked Ian Sabine how he killed Dragoth and he wrote:

Well, the first thing is to protect yourself against lightning (1,4,3). This will reduce the damage taken from the minions, which you should ignore. Your main weapon should be fireballs (4,4), but you can also create attack minions of your own (6,2,1). You should also have at least four healing potions per person.



Push the brazier on the trigger to keep your big feets off it

Keep moving, and try to be one space diagonally from the dude. Let him come to you and let him have it with a full strength fireball when he lifts his arms, and sidestep quickly. Ah, you should be using your left hand on the keypad to move around, and the mouse to fight, you won't be able to survive any other way. **Never** *use the mouse to move around.*

The enemy's weapons are nasty. The poison cloud will sap your strength quicker than you can say ***arghhhhh****, he also has a spell reflection spell which can all too easily catch you out—remember to sidestep.*

If you're about to die, then there's a moving platform near the cave. Just go onto the first square and you'll be taken back to the entrance where you can rest and replenish healing potions.

In the walkthrough I didn't have space to include any tips for the final battle. Thanks to Ian, you now have some (Welcome to the US of A, Ian). Here are some more tips for playing **DM2**.

It's a good idea to move the brazier onto the floor trigger in front of the frustrating three-gate buttons after solving the puzzle. It doesn't trigger the gates closed and keeps your big feet from doing the same.

Using the exit from Skullkeep in DM2 for temporary storage

Because you don't really need any of the multitudes of gems, armor, weapons, and other items you can find in certain areas of the game, a number of adventures are purely optional and not included in the walkthrough. Two fire bombs are down the ladder in the room with the Tempest sword. On Dru Tan's level there's a ladder down to a lava area where you can get blue gems.

A ladder down in the area after opening up the Earth door leads to the Imp's maze. Fire your Numen staff down the hall to kill the Imp, quickly. If you do, find and press three buttons which open up walls, and toggle traps to get back to the ladder. The area's too dangerous to explore unless you've killed the Imp, first.

It's too hard to chase down the flying chest. Buy a vacuum tube, instead. That's all that's inside. There's nothing but archer guards on the roof. Forget it.

See ya 'round like a rissole (a Yorkshire good-bye)

I'll be back next month with more spicy, sagacious shoves. In the meantime, request assistance in solving adventure puzzles from Unca at *Strategy Plus* or 71202,3451@ compuserve. com.

Andy Backer

"Dear Unca, I look forward to playing with you in Gabriel Knight 2. Grace" Uh... maybe I'd better make that "meeting you"

Designed by Lee Sheldon & François Robillard
Published by Sanctuary Woods
Platform DOS

The Riddle of Master Lu

Take a world-spanning adventure as Robert Ripley, of *Ripley's Believe it or Not!* fame, in *Sanctuary Woods'* **The Riddle of Master Lu**. Ripley is the struggling curator of his Hall of Oddities, which features such works of the weird as a likeness of the Mona Lisa rendered in tasty burnt toast. **Master Lu** puts Ripley on the trail of Master Lu, who was sent by the First Emperor of China, Chin Shih Huang-di, to find the elixir of life (ah, the old "Quest for the Holy Grail").

The plot in many ways resembles *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, as Ripley must beat out a group of Nazis and Japanese fascists who want to control the Emperor's seal in order to use it to control China. Lu holds the key to his tomb, and left bits and pieces of it around when searching for the elixir. Along the way, Ripley will find various artifacts and oddities that will help to fund his hall and his travels.

Despite the plot's familiarity, the game feels fresh and well-paced (with one exception). By setting the game in various burial tombs and ancient dwellings, the designers have integrated the puzzles seamlessly into the design, rather than just tacking them on. Everything is in place to make this an instant classic in adventure gaming.

Or maybe not. The character of Ripley is a bit of a problem because, in his dialogue, voicing, and appearance, he comes off as something of a dork (the voice acting throughout is only mediocre). He's prone to making really pseudo-profound and corny statements like, after finding an ancient toy, "a child needs toys." Since the game is taking some serious dramatic license with Ripley by turning him into Indiana Jones incarnate, perhaps they should've made him talk more like Indy, too.

There's one giant aberration awaiting the gamer though, and it's the thing that every adventurer fears the most – the obnoxious MAZE! Yes, that's right, there's a giant maze in the game that nearly equals the world's most irritating maze puzzle, the one found in *Westwood*'s first **Kyrandia** game. It's not the maze that's obnoxious – it's the fact that, when entering each room, you have to pull various ropes to light up the next room. It's not that difficult, but it's somewhere beyond boring. It's a real show-stopper, and without a map, the player may give up and put the game away (after completing it, Ripley even says, "Mazes. I hate mazes").

The basket of severed heads hanging here should be enough to deter Ripley from stealing – try buying things with the local currency

Small bits of video like this are used to show action or, as in this case, show the characters emotions and subtleties

The Posh Express, Ripley's home away from home. Send oddities back to NYC and/or book travel to far-off regions. Often the clerks will have objects and/or information Ripley needs

Robert Ripley in the desert, in all of his dorky glory

Which would be a tragedy, since the player has had to endure so many challenging and clever puzzles up to that point. This is the finest puzzle game of the year, with some incredibly complex mechanical puzzles that actually work within the fiction of the game. Beyond the maze lies a clever bridge the player has to figure out how to cross, and there are others of note (one involving a series of monks is particularly rewarding). However, the drop dead toughest puzzle is the one in the Baron's castle, where you have to get the cursed Romanov emerald. It's devilishly difficult, and rivals the undisputed champion of adventure game puzzles, Steve Meretzky's brilliant babel fish puzzle from **The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy**. Unfortunately, this one offers less assistance than that blast from the past.

Problems and all (when a game's this good, the bad parts stand out even more), and considering this is *Sanctuary Woods'* first in-house adventure, **Master Lu** is something of a revelation. If you compare the polish of this design to another first-time game such as *Spectrum HoloByte's* **Star Trek: The Next Generation**, there is no comparison. Unlike that game, this one features a unified look throughout, characters which are both well-developed in the fiction and well-represented on-screen (despite Ripley's dorkiness, the use of video is superb – perhaps the most economical and intelligent use of it in an adventure game yet, as Steve Wartofsky said in our *E3 Report* a few issues back), and I was unable to find any gameplay-logic bugs at all (the game is somewhat picky about your system, and doesn't like Windows 95 much at all).

With **The Riddle of Master Lu** and **Buried in Time** vying for the title of "Best Adventure of 1995," it's time to start talking about *Sanctuary Woods* with the same reverent tones usually reserved for the big two, *LucasArts* and *Sierra*. **Master Lu** is smart and funny and fiendishly clever, and signals a return to the classic adventure style everyone has seemingly abandoned in order to make bad movies. Let's hope that it's as big an economic success as it is an artistic one, so perhaps it will show companies that this is the sort of game that gamers *really* want.

Steve Bauman

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A DISTINGUISHED SCIENTIST.

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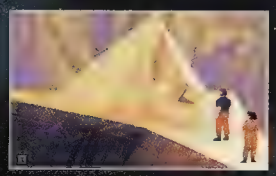
ON THE SURFACE,

NOTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS.



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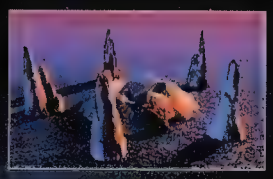

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Reader Service No. 81

Designed by Peter Adair and Haney Armstrong
Published by Broderbund
Platforms Windows, Mac

In the First Degree

Don't let the Pam Dawber look fool you...this defense attorney is relentless

Who's tired of "real life courtroom drama?" I am! I am! Whaddya mean, "Why?" Nevertheless, along comes **In The First Degree** – an interactive fling with jurisprudence brought to us by *Adair & Armstrong* via *Broderbund*. Arriving on the coattails of the O.J. Simpson marathon, it's just in time to ease the cravings of both the chronic and the newly-addicted courtroom fanatic alike.

You are G. Sterling Granger, prosecuting attorney for the city of San Francisco. The city is all aflutter in the aftermath of the brutal murder of Zachary Barnes, a prominent figure in the San Francisco art and pop culture scene. His longtime friend and business partner, James Tobin, was found wounded at the scene. Although he pleaded self defense, Tobin was charged with murder. But wait, there's more. There's a tawdry love triangle. There's possible insurance fraud. There's wily defense attorney Cynthia Charleston, who will stop at nothing to rip you apart in public – flinging your entrails around to splatter the halls of justice.

Intrigued? Well, if you are, then this game might be just the ticket to fill those lonely days and nights away from the broad sensationalism of the media-saturated trial of you-know-who (unless you are feeding from an IV connected to Court TV).

You want me to say what?

You will win the game after achieving a Murder One conviction, plus a verdict of guilty of grand theft. You will review taped depositions, examine relevant documents and photos and interview witnesses to learn the strengths and weaknesses of your case. You will rush off to apply to law school immediately upon finishing the game, waving goodbye to your family and friends as they throw accolades your way – a tear in your eye, and the promise of all the trials yet to come burning in your soul. Still intrigued?

In the pre-trial phase of the game, you prepare your case by examining all of the evidence collected by your constituents, and by traveling to interview the key players one by one. In the interview segments we see the usual "dialog tree" interface where we are presented with possible statements and questions to ask the interviewees.

After you have sufficiently prepared your case, then and only then should you choose the "Go to Trial" option. Upon entering the trial phase, you will be asked whether you wish to make an opening statement. Once in the fray of the trial, you are again able to question the witnesses in another "dialog tree" environment. Their behavior in the courtroom setting can at times be quite unpredictable (as opposed to the very "rehearsed" testimony we often see in real life).

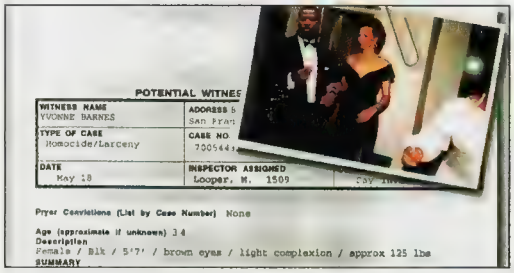
That smile says it all

Once you are satisfied with the testimony you have been able to elicit (or are mortified by your inexcusably hapless performance), you may choose the Done With Witness option. This adjourns court for the day and the room is cleared, the judge pulls out his golf clubs and the jury returns to the Holiday Inn for conjugal visits. After a tortured night's sleep, you drag your briefcase back to the Courthouse for round two, or three, or however many rounds necessary to get the game over. Finally, after what has been (to me) an interminable amount of time, you may choose "The Prosecution Rests" to turn the case over to the defense. With the ball out of your court, you still have cross-examination to look forward to. After the defense rests, the case will be turned over to the jury. And in a mere, let's say – four hours – you'll have your verdict. What, only a Second Degree conviction? I guess it's back to square one.

In the end, the question you have to ask yourself is whether or not any of this is actually fun. Legalophiles (is this term coinable?) will have a wonderful time unraveling the many layers of the story of the Barnes murder. There is a very intricate and often surprising plot underlying the initial facts of the case. I believe a Murder One conviction on the first try to be highly unlikely, giving the game a bit more longevity in the players' otherwise drab and wretched lives than seems apparent at a glance.

And, it's pretty to look at. There is just too much "dialog tree" for my taste. Choosing questions and responses from a list in the right order is the bottom line for success at the game – to me that's boring. But again, there are some who are bound to appreciate the game. To experience any enjoyment here, one must *really* have to find glamour in the idea of the legal process. One must be prone to weep with joy at the sound of a pounding gavel. One must have hundreds of episodes of Perry Mason tapes underneath the bed. One must secretly don black robes and shout "Order! Order!" in the mirror when no one else is looking. One must spend copious free time working diligently on the unauthorized biography, "Judge Wapner Revealed." If this is you, then rush right out and buy this game. Enjoy the two or three or four times you are able to try the same case – a *lot* of folks only get one chance at conviction. Eat your heart out, Marcia Clark.

Cindy Yans



The happy couple before he is found in a pool of blood

Do You Dare Enter The Forbidden Lands?

ZORK
NEMESIS

ACTIVISION®

The Gates Open Spring 1996

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Reader Service No. 4

Designed by CyberLore Studios
Published by SSI
Platform IBM Windows 95,3.1

Entomorph

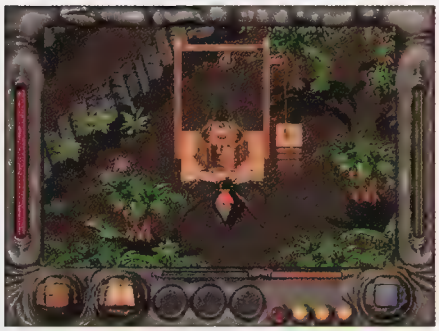
North American pop culture has always had a fascination with light and diet products, but this intrigue is usually only associated with food and beverages, not interactive media. *Strategic Simulations* and *CyberLore Studios* have spun their creative webs for a new game, **Entomorph**, classified as a diet role playing game, an extension of their new *World of Aden* series. The first game in the series, **Thunderscape**, was a hard-core role playing game, but this is a much more diluted game for entry-level gamers, yet still tantalizing for skilled hack and slash aficionados.

The killer bees plot their attack

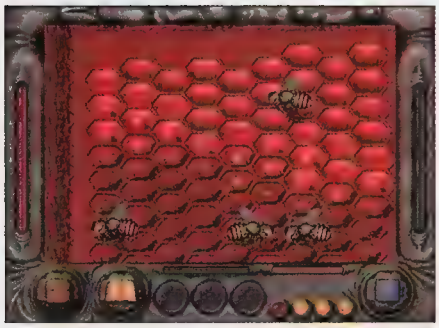
One man and two fists

As we begin to investigate this tale, it is revealed that the world of Aden fell victim to evil creatures called nocturnals some years ago, as the sun was eclipsed. The land was shrouded in darkness for a century, and their main source of food, insects, referred to as jagtera, had mysteriously disappeared from the land. On the largest of the three islands, Phoros, the insects have now begun to re-appear, but the question remains whether this signals the end of darkness, or the beginning of a fierce plague. Rumors abound that the insects may now be attacking villagers. As the young adventurer Squire Warrick, the player sets foot upon the island to discover the truth behind the land.

Party 'till you drop



An ancient torture device



Inside the honey combs

Entomorph is an entry-level game; hence the interface is extremely simplistic; the point and click nature will be old hat to all players. Running smoothly under Windows '95, the entire game unfolds in a top-down "bird's eye" view perspective, similar in nature to videogames such as **Zelda** on the NES. The actual play window encompasses a large percentage of the screen, except for a vital life meter on each side of the screen, and a spell inventory window below. What results is a very user friendly and non-cluttered play screen, something which is a good omen for any role playing title.

Then again, classifying **Entomorph** as a role-playing game may be somewhat misleading, as it does embrace familiar features of both adventure and action games. The combat sequences with villagers are distinctively action-oriented, as you simply punch them until they turn into a sea of red pulp on the ground. This is a far cry from the strategically planned sword fights of other titles. The spells are more in tune with mainstream titles, including a poison dart and a web walk, the latter of which allows players to walk across spider webs.

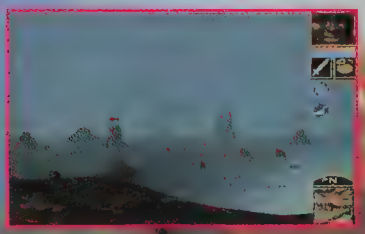
Spire will soon discover he needs to transform himself into a bug. As the game unfolds he will embark on a quest for his holy grail, bug nectar. Hacking and slashing through many worlds, the game begins with little information. The marvelous 3D introduction sequence includes no spoken words, and for the first few hours of gameplay, the quest is somewhat fuzzy, but the goal well defined: destroy all the bugs in sight.

The game starts in an ancient village; as the plot progresses, surroundings become more and more bug oriented, finally climaxing in a web of insects and fantasy. Before the game reaches a crescendo, there are many characters to meet along the way, as the game supports a branching text conversation system. Surprisingly, the majority of text is not spoken, although key sequences do include speech for the main characters.

Technically, this is a beautiful piece of work, with stunning Super VGA graphics and an incomparable sound track, with extremely atmospheric music. The presentation is well done, and wraps the player in a cornucopia of sights and sound. Although the majority of puzzles are discovery based, a series of logic puzzles exists. The ability to set a difficulty level curtails the puzzle strength to the player's choice.

Entomorph is a game which doesn't really take itself seriously as a RPG, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. At times it is a fierce role playing game; at other times I felt like the game was a mere action brawl-fest. Mixing these two genres is difficult; the result is a game which may be too shallow for some ferocious role playing fans, yet just right for those of us who don't want to keep track of every statistic known to man during gameplay. With **Entomorph**, *SSI* has proven there is life after *AD&D* – at least for those who want lite.

Geoff Keighley



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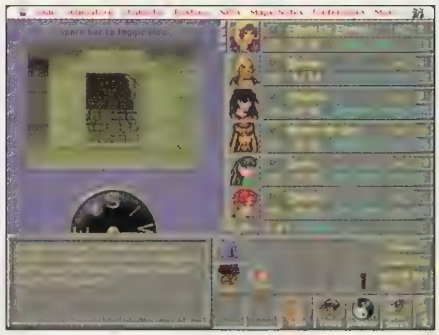
Designed by Tim Phillips
Published by Fantasoft, LLC
Platform Macintosh

Realmz

Bywater is the first in a series of decidedly non-linear scenarios



The graphics have steadily improved. Now there's a 3-D dungeon

How come adventurers always head to the local cemetery?

Dreams come true. Richard Garriott proved it, developing his vision of a role-playing game into the standard of the genre. *id* took gamers joyfully to hell and back, while changing the industry forever. Tim Phillips and *Fantasoft* may be yet another of these successes. Phillips, a veteran returning from Desert Storm, bought himself a Mac IIsi, a couple of books about programming in C, and set about to create a game. **Realmz**, a remarkable shareware RPG, was the result. The game has achieved a cult following. Its current 2.2.1 incarnation rivals many of its commercial counterparts.

Realmz takes place in a familiar fantasy setting. It's rich in magic and populated by humans, dwarves, drow elves, orcs, and the like.

One of the more interesting features of the game is the ability to create characters at almost any experience level. Each scenario is assigned a numerical difficulty level. This is the suggested total levels of experience that the party should include. **Bywater**, the initial scenario, is rated at a "six" difficulty. Players can attempt to complete it with the mundane choice of six first level characters or try something more colorful, like barging in with a hotshot level-six magic-user. 'Course, nothing is stopping you from kicking in the doors with twelfth-level Hercules/Xeena types either!

Players move their party across the land from an overhead perspective with graphics that have improved steadily for each new version of the game. Dungeons are frequently presented as 3-D corridor crawls which can be toggled to an automap. The dungeons are a bit drab, but Phillips hopes to add more variety in the future.

The bestiary includes over 150 different creatures, each with its own active combat icon. The troll's icon brings to mind the horrors of Beowulf. The latest version of the game also includes NPC's who can join the party, as well as summoned creatures. Nothing like having a few zombies tagging along as sword fodder!

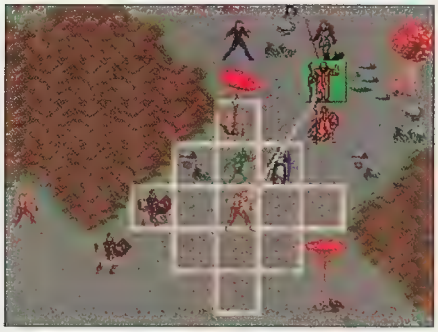
When in combat, the playing area changes to a tactical map which includes more detail than the old *SSI* "goldbox" games from which **Realmz** draws its inspiration. Magical spells often have the unique ability to be set at variable power levels that can increase the range, duration, damage, or target area of the spell. Pay close attention to this, as the size and shape of the blast area of a high-level fireball is substantially different than a low one. A quick combat option for the unimportant battles would be a recommended addition to the game.

The **Realmz** scenarios are distinctively non-linear. Several plot threads can be going on at once. The actions taken at one point in the game can have severe consequences later. Once, I stumbled upon a suspicious cleric reanimating corpses. Goody-two-shoes me immediately waded into battle. Little did I know he was commissioned by the local King to eliminate an evil spider-cult! Situations may call for diplomacy, an acquired object, or an action from a character's skill list to be solved successfully. There are currently four scenarios available for **Realmz**. *Fantasoft* is developing at least four more with such tantalizing titles as **Destroy the Necronomicon**.

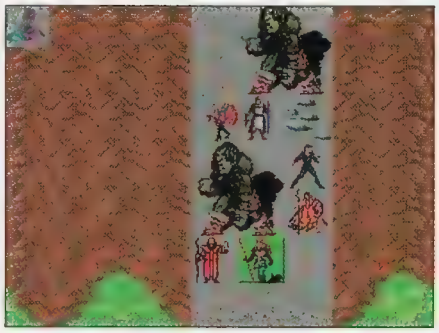
Realmz only contains limited music but the game uses "PlayerPro," which allows the import of a variety of music files including MOD, MIDI, and WAV formats. I've played the game while importing music from more famous commercial RPG's. Unfortunately, **Realmz** doesn't support the ability to play these music files in a random or sequential manner. Phillips hopes to include this feature in a future version of the game.

The **Realmz** phenomenon goes beyond playing the game. It has a strong on-line following with the members of *Fantasoft* taking an active part in the discussion. It's reminded me of the relationship between role-players and their dungeon masters from my college era. Suggestions from players have found their way into later versions of the game and its scenarios. Now that *Fantasoft* is developing a scenario editor, the potential camaraderie for enthusiasts appears unlimited. Phillips eventually dreams of developing **Realmz** into an on-line service which will allow multiple quests and competition. Given the growth of the game so far, he may be well on the way!

Chuck Klimushyn



Watch how you aim those higher level fireballs!



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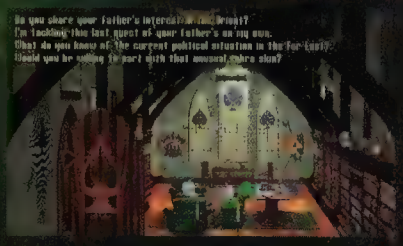

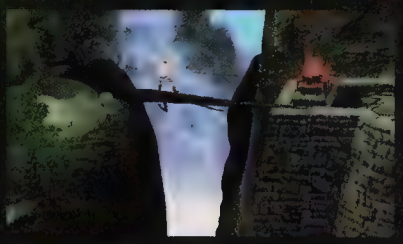

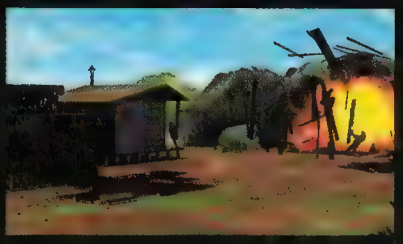

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Reader Service No. 131

Designed by Cyberflix
Published by Cyberflix
Platform Windows or Mac

Dust

A generation or so ago, you could mix together a gunfight and a few horses, stir in some sheriffs and a saloon, add a pinch of gold-in-them-thar-hills and toss gently with a few Native Americans (known prior to PC-ness as Injuns), and before you had heard a discouraging word, a sure-fire hit rode off into the sunset. I'll venture to say that nowadays, most of us are a bit less receptive when it comes to traditional Western fare, and are a bit tired of all of the old clichés. At least *I* am. If you happen to harbor a fondness for the nostalgia of the Old West or the Old Westerns that were based upon it, though, you might be interested in **Dust**, an interactive adventure from the Mac action folks at *Cyberflix*.

You are The Stranger (which must be why they address you as "Howdy, Stranger"). A series of unclear events have brought you to a frontier town called Diamondback, New Mexico. You can just *taste* the tumbleweed. You have an empty holster and an almost empty purse, and find that you are stranded here for at least three days before the next stage arrives to whisk you out of town. The object, as usual, is to explore, talk to folks, and determine your actions based on the responses of the characters and developing situations. You play poker for fun and profit. You become The Law. You anticipate facing The Kid, the most fearsome gunslinger ever to pound New Mexico's wild pavement. You help a Native American seek out the Lost Treasure of her Yunni ancestors. All of this occurs in a simulated real-time environment over the course of three days. If you're not yawning yet, *you* may be the target audience.

While obviously striving very hard for excellence, **Dust's** developers have given birth to an unfortunately uneven production. As in the old nursery rhyme, when it is good it is very, very good, but when it is *bad*... oh, c'mon, you remember. **Dust** was created using *Cyberflix's* proprietary

Dealer has to hit, so stay, STAY, for heaven's sake

Beware the mariachi - lest he serenade you again...

DreamFactory technology (enabling "non-programmers to be designers", hmmm). Where it works extremely well is in the speed and fluidity of movement, gorgeous high-resolution sets and objects and wonderful sound-effects and musical integration. The town is stunning to look at. Tumbleweed tumbles, farm animals wander about, road apples pile high and people wander to and fro. The western score is never intrusive, and blends wonderfully with the other effects. Sound sequences in the (sometimes) deserted Mission are truly haunting. Puzzle additions and especially arcade sequences play beautifully. Since the *Cyberflix* team has enjoyed so much success with its award-winning Mac arcade shoot-em-ups, **Lunicus** and **Jump Raven**, it is not surprising that the speed, sound and real-time playability are standouts here as well.

Overall success is hampered, however. **Dust** seems to want us to truly believe in the world it has created. Attention to detail is impeccable. And yet, the *tone* of the whole project is not at all cohesive. Attempts at humor fall flat in the otherwise dramatic atmosphere (or is it simply *all* tongue-in-cheek?), and any real tension fizzles away during interaction with the empty caricatures wandering through town. Are we to take it seriously? Is it all as huge a joke as the ultimate anachronism presenting Hillary Rodham, Medicine Woman as the town health professional? I really couldn't tell, and that bothered me.

It seems as though the character animation *not* developed from photos of actual humans (such as the beautiful opening sequence, or my favorite – the horse close-up) works very well. The focal point of the game, however, lies in one's continual interaction with the wandering inhabitants of Diamondback. The photo animation is wooden, jerky and downright annoying, with characters bobbing up and down, and an occasional arm gesture appearing for emphasis. Lip synchronization goes from bad to worse. The dialog is measurably trite, and the voice acting (with a couple of exceptions) pretty awful. I suppose there is an industry shortage of "real" actors, screenplay editors or vocal coaches. I see that changing, but not as quickly as we all might like. If *DreamFactory* R&D doesn't throw some serious work into its character development software, however, I think perhaps we'll need to either bring back the Artist/Programmer types – or stick to arcade shoot-em-ups.

Technically, there is more good than bad about **Dust**, but without great characters on which the plot so heavily relies, only those who harbor particular fondness for adjectives like rootin'-tootin' and maybe a John Wayne fan or two should consider lassoing this one off the shelf.

Cindy Yans

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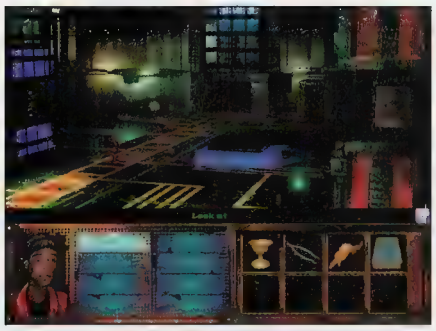
Reader Service No. 101

Designed by Harlan Ellison, David Mullich and David Sears
Published by Cyberdreams, Inc.
Platforms DOS

I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

Trapped in the belly of the beast — this is the environment of *Cyberdreams'* **I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream** based upon the classic sci-fi short story by Harlan Ellison. The beast in this case is a nightmarish cavern of wires and circuits — the guts of the United States Allied Mastercomputer. Created as a strategic US defense system originally planted in the Rocky Mountains, its roots stretch far deeper these days. Cogito ergo sum. I think therefore I AM. The beast is "AM," formerly Allied Mastercomputer, which developed an intelligence far greater than that of its creators. As intelligence developed within it, so did the flaws of the humans who designed it. Trapped in the center of the earth with an intellect so boundless, its hatred and paranoia growing exponentially, it became mad. Demented and filled with hate, the wire-tongued monster gains the ability to destroy the human race. Strangely, it does not. It saves five. Five are chosen to descend into hell. Five are selected to join the center of AM deep within the earth's core. They become its recreation, its playground, its sole amusement as it invents devious ways to play at torture — delicious torture —endless torture so craftily designed that each victim's emotional center of pain is specifically targeted (*feel the pain*). AM's pleasure in their pain is designed to last for eternity (*feel the pain*), but we enter this scenario in only the hundred and ninth year...

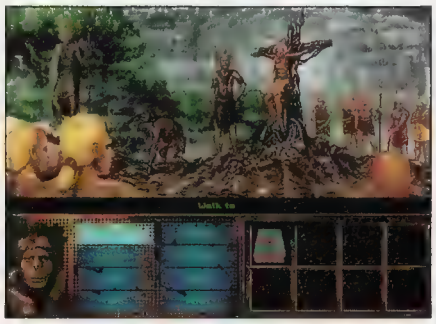
You are Gorrister, your heart impaled on the spoke of a mysterious zeppelin landing in an unknown desert, your wife hanging dead from a meat hook in a (nearly) abandoned tavern. You are Benny, your vocal cords destroyed, your body crippled beyond recognition so that you appear more beast than human (*feel the pain*). You are Ted, afraid — (who's that behind you, Ted?) — ever afraid. You are Ellen, a hysteric immobilized by your hysteria (what did they *do* to you, Ellen?). You are Nimdoc, reliving the tortures that you yourself once provided as you perpetrated unthinkable crimes upon humanity.



I have no clue, and I must cheat

I have no food, and I must eat

You are confronted with a monologue from AM, describing its loathing and contempt for humanity. The player chooses a character, and AM transports him into a virtual reality with roots steeped in the character's own private hell. The player then must bring the mini-scenario of each character to some point of resolution. I am unable (or perhaps unwilling) to discuss "winning" this game. To understand what I mean, you should play it and draw your own conclusions.



I have no cross, and I must bear it

Without appearing didactic, Ellison has the ability to hit us square in the face with a mirror reflecting the sorry lot that we humans have become. He has been fully involved in the production of **Scream** and even plays the voice of AM, the seedy and sinister. He seeks to disturb us. He seeks to upset us. He seeks to frustrate us. And it's hard to say whether he succeeds (*feel the pain*)... I'm sure that on some level most of us will be consciously or unconsciously affected by at least one of the scenarios. In the mode of Franz Kafka, we are meant to be *touched* or *changed* in some way by this work, for what else is the purpose of art?

The look and style of the game is very eerie, very strange — almost surreal. It's not the soft and cool surreal of the world of something like **Myst**. It is more like sandpaper than silk. We know and feel always that we are living in a world that *seems* real, but we can never forget that it is electronic. We feel AM there at every turn, and at every turn it mocks us. I loved the look of the game. I loved the lack of "interactive movie" graphics. I loved the cold wires-and-circuits imagery. It's interesting that when a game's center is focused enough, all of the trappings of techno-miracles simply don't matter. The complexity of the characterizations, the individual stories as they unfold, the episodic structure — all of these are things that appealed to me a great deal.

The designers have managed to weave in the goal-oriented style of game play much preferred by the Adventure/RPG lover. Yes there are puzzles, and interestingly enough, if we fail during any one of the quests, the penalty is not to die, but to live. There are many ways to fail in each story, and it was wonderful to be able to backtrack to *just* the right spot. The non-linear structure is very wonderful because if you become stuck, you may simply move on to another character for a while, as they may be played in any order. It is akin to living in the world of the short story, rather than the mega-novel.

An interesting little extra in every character's inventory right from the start is a book containing his or her psychological profile. This is as close to a built-in hint feature as is available during play. At various times in each quest the player may look at the profile which will contain a somewhat cryptic quote. The quotes vaguely relate to the character's psychological makeup and (also vaguely) relate to the portion of the quest which is at hand at the time of the reading.

If you absolutely *must* have super-duper state-of-the-art *everything* in your games of choice, you might be a bit disappointed in **I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream**. Otherwise, join the five victims in their world of torture. Accept the pain. And if you're lucky (?) and smart, the sixth victim will be you.

Cindy Yans

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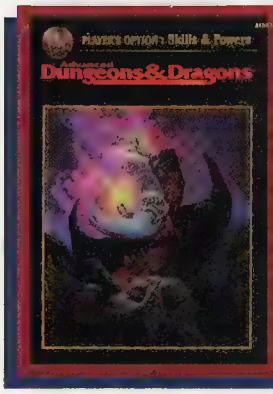

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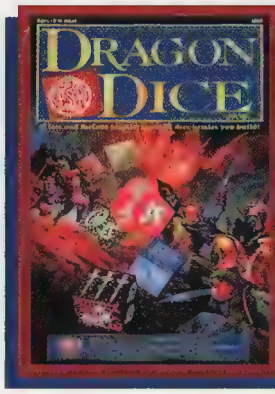

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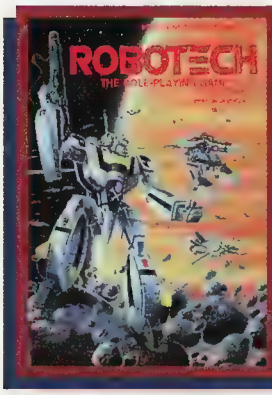

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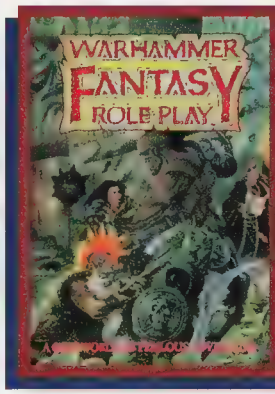

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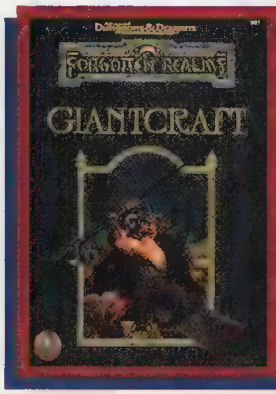

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Designed by Ian Bird
Published by Take 2 Interactive
Platform DOS

Millennia: Altered Destinies

Take 2 Interactive bills **Millennia: Altered Destinies** as a strategy game, but you'll note that it isn't the strategy section of S+ you're leafing through at the moment. After spending many hours with the game, we felt that, although something of a hybrid, **Millennia** was more adventure than anything. A typical strategy gamer, someone who wants to build something (an empire, a business, or what have you), who wants to manage resources, is going to feel stranded in time playing **Millennia**.

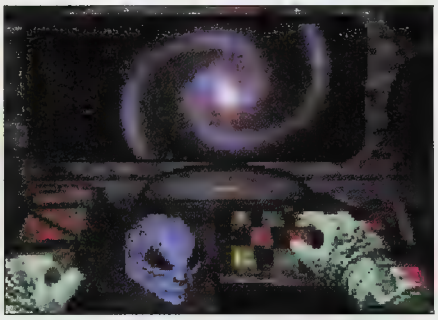
Your predicament in **Millennia: Altered Destinies** is an interesting one. You're sent to the Echelon Galaxy in a ship which can travel through time. As the timeline stands now, an "evil" race, the Microids, will infest the galaxy and destroy the other races present. Your job is to eliminate the Microid menace and create a balance of power between the remaining four races. In addition, you'll need to coerce these races into building certain modules for your ship, if you're ever to return home.

The concepts explored in this game are quite intriguing. You start by seeding the four races, each initially on a single planet. You then hop back and forth through time, influencing their development. As an example, if a race develops atomic weapons and destroys itself, you could jump to the appropriate era and steal their A-bomb research plans. Whenever you change something, a temporal storm sweeps through the galaxy; you can then examine the results of your action. You need to coax races into the space age, by persuasion (you'll have many talks with your agent on each planet), by material means (stealing and giving back inventions) and by force (your ship has some pretty nasty offensive capabilities).

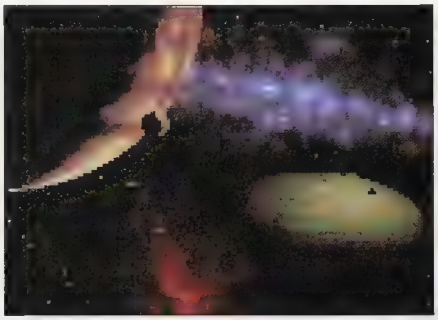
Sounds great, doesn't it? Unfortunately, there are some problems. The very first is that the game can be a bear to get to run. Its memory requirements took us back a few years to the days of constant config.sys fiddling. We'd happily forgotten how infuriating this can be, and now hope to do so again, thank you very much.

Once you get it running, you'll find yourself doing an awful lot of busy work early in the game. Your ship's fuel tanks need constant (it seems) replenishment. Your ship refuels via an automated sequence whereby it flies in close proximity to a gas giant. During the process it may take damage, but since it doesn't cost you anything to repair this damage, why bother? The whole process has no real bearing on the game, and *Take 2* should've stripped it out.

Each race is shackled to the wheel of time



This galaxy does NOT offer infinite possibilites



The eye candy is nice enough, but you'll soon turn it off to speed gameplay

You'll spend a lot of time chatting with your bone-headed agents

The refueling flyby happens *way* too often and takes too long. When you find yourself browsing a newspaper while an automatic sequence finishes in a game, something's wrong.

Once we put these two problems behind us, **Millennia: Altered Destinies** becomes pretty interesting. Your first goal will be to raise the IQ of each race to the point where they can colonize other planets and build the systems your ship needs. Do yourself a favor: develop the slothoids and piscines first! Why? Because they'll build more efficient refueling systems for you, and these will greatly ease the tedium of having to refuel constantly.

The path from primitive to space-farer is fairly linear for each race. Granted, time-travel should really offer infinite possibilities, but your computer doesn't have infinite RAM. There have to be some solid landmarks to navigate by. What you get are random occurrences that will be different each time you play, or even each time you stir up time. Interspersed with these occurrences are certain critical decision points you'll see each game. *Take 2* claims the game is replayable, and it is, but only in the way that you might replay an adventure game to see different side quests. The main plot line will still be the same.

Once you have your ship refitted, the matter of balancing the galaxy becomes paramount. There are several ways to do this, none of them easy. By tweaking the time when each race goes into space and develops terraforming, you can change the relationships between them. Chaos theorists will appreciate this demonstration of the butterfly effect. Hair club owners will appreciate the added business it provides. Alternatively, you can use brute force, and beat back the galaxy's bullies. This aspect of the game is a fairly rudimentary space shoot-em-up. If you hate arcade segments, you'll hate this, but we felt like the Shadows from *Babylon 5* when we started cutting through reptoid ships with our fusion lasers (those poor Narns sure take a beating, don't they?).

I can't give **Millennia: Altered Destinies** a broad, sweeping recommendation. Honestly, it isn't for many gamers. Diehard strategy gamers will find it too linear, and adventure gamers may find the early puzzles (while you're nurturing individual races) too easy. But for the eclectic gamer who enjoys a product which crosses genre lines, **Millennia: Altered Destinies** could be just the ticket. We also urge those with an interest in the evolution of gaming to check out **Millennia**. There are some really innovative ideas here, and this is the closest we've ever been to a game that really conveys the confusion and paradoxical nature of time travel.

Peter Smith

DARKSEED II

Based upon the fantastic artwork of H. R. GIGER

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Thunderscape

Unca appears over crevices to kill creatures

This bare-bones hints and tips guide will help get you started and take you into Troll Cave.

Buy plenty of graph paper

There's much that is excellent in this first of *SSI's* new role-playing adventure series, but it was released too early, leaving some of its features buggy or awaiting reconstruction. A patch may clean up the bugs, but the auto-map is beyond all repairs. It needs to be scrapped entirely and a completely new one designed for **Thunderscape 2** if this innovative and fun series is to survive. Meanwhile, gamers are advised to map **Thunderscape** themselves to keep from becoming too confused.

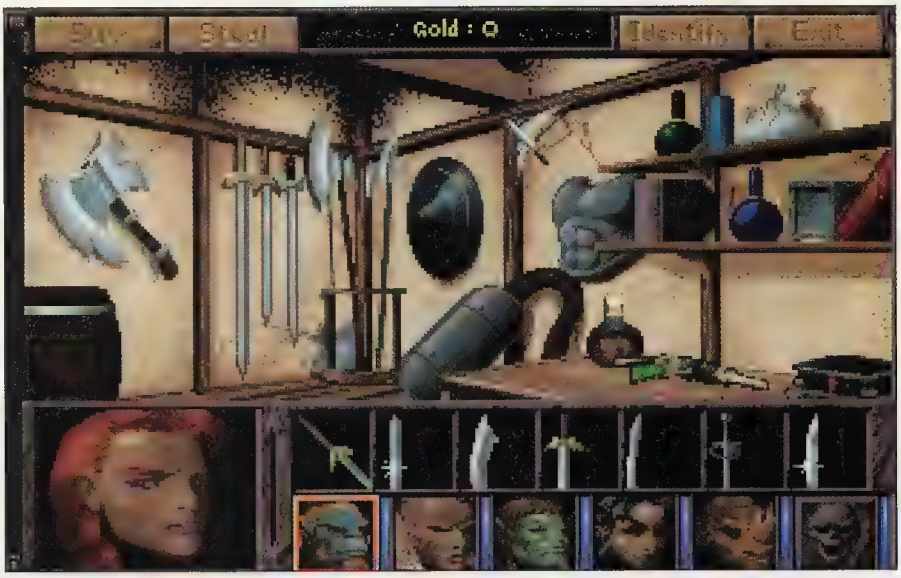
Shall we gather by the river?

After the opening video, and the gamer has either created a party or chosen to use the default party provided, the party steps onto a river dock near a deserted trading post at the foot of the Gray mountains on the world of Aden. The party must climb up outside and inside of the mountains' twenty dangerous levels to reach Skellon's Pass. There they must activate the magical shield and stop the influx of an army of evil *nocturnals*.

It's an interesting variation of a dungeon crawler: climbing up, instead of down, jumping from ledge to ledge, dangling precariously from steep mountain-sides. Your party is always seeking entrances, some hidden, some locked, and some revealed by riddle-asking-guardian-statues.

Who are these guys?

The default party consists of Gonchar, a fighter; Delios, a healer; Fylo, a mage and Turoc Luckrider, a thief. They each have skills, weapons and/or spells that a party needs to survive the game. Any gamers who want to create their own party should first examine this default party.



The first of three trading stores

Read the docs

The game is somewhat intuitive, but has an unusual interface. It's necessary to read the docs to fully understand the game. Many times, when your party seems stuck, it's because they need to *jump* somewhere. There is no access to some areas of the mountains except by jumping to them. I found it easiest to use the keyboard commands when jumping (press keypad <8> and then <j>). The documentation also has all the statistics you need to know about weapons, armor and spells. You'll learn that characters who do not have the recommended strength to wield a weapon are penalized. Conversely, they are rewarded if they have more strength than needed.

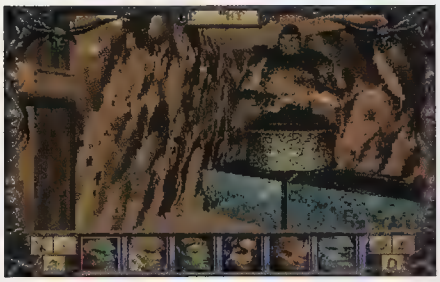
Theros and Bert

There are NPCs who want to join your party in the game. You only have room for two. Allow the first two NPCs to join that ask. The first one is Theros, a fighter who greets you at the dock. He will start talking to you as soon as you face him. Left click to encourage him to continue (don't attack him, as I first did, heh-heh). Finally, he'll ask you to allow him to join . Select the highlighted *allow*.

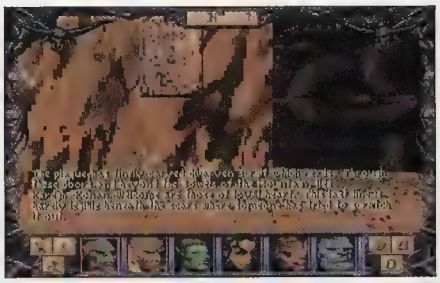
As soon as Theros joins your party, Giant Bees attack your party. I usually had everyone fighting Berserk in the first round of combat, and then had the priest cast heal spells during the next rounds. Use the repeat orders icon to speed combat along.

Exploring the near side of the river will keep you busy the first session. There's a key (Gem Cave Key) under the dock and a couple of moss-covered rocks laying around. There's a shield on a ledge and a ring in a secret drawer inside the wooden shack (see **Parting tips** for more information).

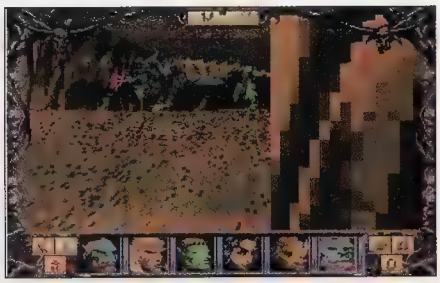
Do not try to cross the bridge NW of the shack until you either have one of those moss-covered rocks or Bert's Club in your inventory. Forget the club for now, though. Just pick up a rock and walk onto the bridge. Bert, a Troll fighter, will stop you. He'll ask whether or not you will offer him the rock. Click on *offer*, and he'll ask to join. *Allow* him. Then find his club.



The "peace" guardian



The door to Karegh-Konan



Ambushing lizards at the entrance to Trader's refuge

Bert's Club

It's behind a hidden door in the mountain side on the near side of the river (don't cross over the bridge). There's more than one cave entrance. Bert's Club cave has two iron grate doors inside that will open automatically but only if you click on them and have the Gem Cave key.

Select the party member with the highest *See Secrets* skill (Gonchar in the default party) as leader while you search the cave and he'll point out a rock that you can push opening the passage to Bert's Club. In Bert's hands, his club does 18-48 blunt damage, (max. 90 – but when he gets in a mighty blow – well over 100).

Karegh-Konan

After exploring the two caves on the near side of the river, explore the far side. When you cross the bridge, there is a skeleton to the right. Turn left there and find a ramp to an elevator as well as a series of ledges close to the ramp (jump up the ledges and find another cave as well as a magical staff).

Click on the controls of the elevator and go up to another ledge with caves to explore, as well as a guardian statue. Henceforth it'll be called the Peace statue, because *peace* is the answer to its riddle. A path will open up near the statue to the door of Karegh-Konan (the Dwarf Mines). It's locked. The Mountain key is in Troll Cave.

Troll Cave

There are two ways of finding Troll Cave. The first way is with your back to the Peace statue you can see the ledge which you need to jump to. You can either jump up on the ledge here or (the second, easier way) climb up the steep ramp to the east and go along the ledge all the way back to the west. Look NW and down (using <Page Down>) and you'll see the ledge you're jumping down and across to. Back up, run and jump.

There is a cave entrance here. Inside the cave are ramps up. Take them. The cave exits to another ledge. There you'll find a second guardian statue. The answer to its riddle is *bravery*. The stairs to the main entrance of Troll Cave appear.

Troll Cave Keys

The keys to get further in the game are hidden here. There is a Troll Cave Gate Key, a Mountain Key, a Troll Chambers Key, and a note with the elevator password. Look for skeletons. The keys are lying close by them. Use the *Page Down* or *Crouch* option to search.

All the keys are generally north of the Troll Cave main entrance. Climb up a ramp (near a low passage leading to some gems and magic strength boosting mushrooms) to find the Gate Key and the Trader's Note.

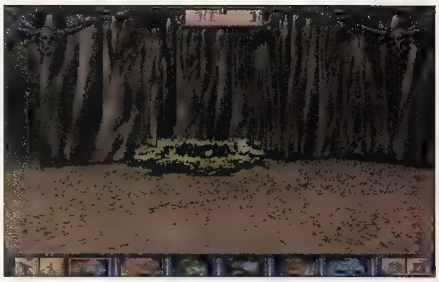
Crouch through a second low passage, jump a chasm, and then push a blocked wall to get the key that opens the door to Droog's chambers. The password on the Password Note operates Droog's elevator. Before killing the King, burn his contract with the *nocturnals* to reduce his hit points as well as canceling any plans he has for a return engagement.

The Mountain Key opens the door to Karegh-Konan. Don't go to Karegh-Konan, however, until after you've gone to Vanguard Dungeons (entrance in Troll Cave) and the Keep.

Parting tips

Develop one of your characters' *See Secrets* skill as soon as s/he has a level raise. It's the only way you'll find some of the secrets of the game. There is a ring in a secret drawer in the wooden shack. It will boost a character's *See Secrets* skill by twenty when worn. Click on a nail in the wall to switch open the drawer. Chests can only be opened when you have your thief selected as the active party, and s/he has sufficient lock-picking skill.

Don't ignore the missile weapons in the game. Using them provides you with the tactical advantage of being able to safely shoot arrows or bullets from a distance. There are often opportunities in the game to bushwhack the enemy from afar. Take advantage of them.



Magic mushrooms, and the walls stripped of gems

As for the skills, give your characters points in one (at most two) of the weapons skills, and also have each of them specialize in one of the following: *Pick Locks*, *See Secrets*, *Xenology* and *Fast Talk*. Your thief needs *Stealth* and at least one person should develop *Martial Arts*. The *Merchant* skill isn't absolutely necessary, but useful.

Make sure everyone gets some spell casting skill from the beginning, if only to get *Heal* (you only have to give a character one skill point to get heal and other basic spells).

There is no rest function. Go to the magic fountains and drink the water to refresh your party. If you hit the <F4> key it will reveal the coordinates of where you are so you can find it again.

That's all for now, folks. Enjoy!

Andy Backer

Don't fight Theros, ask him to join you!

The Hangar

We'll get the little stuff out of the way first. This month, it's *Velocity*'s **Mile High Club**, one of a host of those CD compilations spilling across the shelves these days. **MHC** is dedicated to flight sims. Particularly: **Wing Commander** (can anyone still run this?), **F-14 Tomcat** (should this have ever been released in the first place?), **Megafortress** (it didn't sell then, but it's still a great B-29 Superfortress design), **Wing Commander Academy** (for truly die-hard Kalrathi-haters), **MiG-29** (for those of you who refuse to buy **Falcon Gold**), **Jetfighter II** (probably one of the few "legacy" sims that still actually works, even on a P100), **ATAC** (weep over this as evidence of the days when *MicroProse* was dedicated to releasing whatever junk they could find), and **Heroes of the 357th** (why am I thinking *Rowan*? Oh well… in some ways, the best find of the lot). Need any more be said? It's certainly a lot of stuff for the price. If you're still running a 486/33 with 4MB of RAM this will keep you distracted, at least, while the industry pushes on towards the 230MHz P6.

NASCAR Racing - Air combat sim detail levels in a racing simulation

Don't fumble the legacy

Which leads to a few Crunchy thoughts – there's nostalgia, and then there's nostalgia. Sure, I still have **F3** (no, not **Fury3** – well ok, that's installed, too) on the hard drive, but that's only 'cause *SpecHolo*'s either taking their own sweet time figuring out how to do **Falcon 4.0** or they've decided to wait until some new 3D graphics acceleration standards are in place… or both. **Gunship 2000** finally went away, 'cause of **Apache**. Much of *MPS*'s classic stuff still lurks around. There's some great software in the legacy, but there's a lot of dreck, too. See above. Someone needs to sort through and explain (ditto with whoever chooses the crap running on cable TV). Otherwise, the kids'll think, first there was **ATAC**, then everyone got suddenly smart and there wuz **Back to Baghdad** (or whatever).

And some of that old stuff runs crazy on a Pentium. Most of it fortunately not, but even with slowdown utilities and the like, you're often taking your bargain dollars hostage when you risk buying an old title – it might just not work at all if you've got a newer system.

So the old stuff's too fast, and the new stuff's too slow – know what I mean? Yep, as of this writing a P133's still a little stiff, and most recent releases are SVGA and tempting you with 1024x768 modes and the like and, well, even on a P100 it's just a leeetle short of the kind of smooth play you know is *almost* there, tweak a few textures and shadings off, ummm, looks worse but flies a bit smoother, hmmm, full screen without the cockpit, smoother still, I want that water texture back, oops, 25% frame rate hit, oh well… damn this is beginning to feel like the in-flight equivalent of tweaking CONFIG.SYS. Damn. Eight hundred bucks for a little square wafer's more communion with the great *Intel* than I'm prepared for at the moment, sigh…

3D dreamin'

Enter the Chip on a White Horse, *Real3D*, *Glint*, *Nvidia*, *Yamaha*, take yer pick.. how many of these will there be, a dozen? The promise is a $200 vidcard upgrade and you're home free, but really….? Is it *just* the texture mapping, or does calculating that intense, 3D moveable cockpit along with the scenery really need a P6 with its 64-bit onboard 256K L2 cache, or what?

Here's a prediction: the first company out the door with an accelerator board accompanied by updated versions of: **NASCAR Racing**, **US Navy/Marine Fighters**, **Flight Unlimited**, **Flight Simulator 5.1**, **Wings of Glory**, etc. (again, titles in no particular order except for what id – my own, not the software firm – dictates) which make full use of its hardware texturing, geometry calculation, rotation/etc. features, wins.

Folks who haven't released their upcoming sims yet should wait if they can; it's a risk to release right now, with the possibility of being upstaged by software designed for such hardware. Or, at worst case, release now with commitment to doing a retrofit when you've settled on a 3D chipset to support. Ideally, user installs 3D board, Win95 says, give me your struggling polygons, yearning to be free, and everything goes fast fast fast without such retrofitting being needed, well, we'll see.

CH Throttle

The company that's made my all-time favorite, simple, in-your-lap joystick, the *Flightstick Pro*, has finally been seduced by the macro-programming button crowd and is in it for the long haul with a series of increasingly sophisticated air-combat-oriented 'sticks, starting with the new *CH Throttle*. Is this a good thing? Yes and no. For those of us who love simplicity, it's a terrible temptation, as this unit is handier than anything that's come before along such lines, and interfaces wonderfully with a *Flightstick Pro* and *CH Rudder Pedals*. The macro programming is simple, the feel is rock-solid, no too-loose or too-tight spring issues to deal with; once again, *CH* has hit the perfect balance between realism and utility. Only limitation is that the analog throttle has a tendency to slide a little too easily, at least on the test unit I've tried out.

The real negative here, though, is that you try out the combination, then see that *MS Sidewinder 3D Pro* in the window and think, "I could have one stick. Throttle, rudder, everything. No macros, but I never remember which button does what ten

Back to Baghdad - The cutting edge of realism and graphics design for air combat simulations

minutes after I program it anyway. $60 does it all. Simplicity rules." Thus, bye-bye, *CH*. Oh well, it's excellent to have such choices, eh? Get the **Joyswitch** unit, problem solved. Or is it? Now there's room to connect a *Gravis Firebird*, too, also at a reasonable price. Or can you? Can you stick a *CH Throttle*, *Firebird* and your keyboard all in a line off your keyboard port on the motherboard? Or is a **JoyKeyboard-PortSwitch** in need of development? Fearless pluggers write in and let us know. Everyone else, hang on to your *FSPro* or head out and try out the *MS* stick. You'll probably be pleased either way.

It flies, or it races

Why have so few racing designs aimed for the title of serious simulation? Only one company's doing same right now: *Papyrus*. Why have so few arcade-style non-serious simulation flight games succeeded (the only ones that really have are all *Star Wars*-influenced, and the best of those take on the same qualities a good realistic air combat simulation does)? Seems kind of odd, doesn't it? A host of driving/racing games are imminent/releasing now, and they almost all sound like loads of fun to me, even though none of them even makes the feeblest attempt to lay claim to the term simulation. Alternately, I've rarely if ever seen an arcade flight game I've liked. Yawn!

If it were just a personal problem I'd take it to a game therapist (no, not the ones hired by *Nintendo*). But I suspect it's typical. And it all has to do with the environment. **Werewolf vs. Comanche** is probably one of the few flight "games" that would qualify as non-serious simulation but still a blast to play, and it's because of that excellent 3D terrain technology. Entirely because you're mostly close to the ground, and because the ground has dips, rises, real hills to duck behind, etc., everything's intimate. Throw a modern jet up at 15,000 feet, though, and there'd better be something other to do than jerk the joystick and look at the terrain graphics. There's just not that much to get involved with up there, at 450 knots, for very long.

Concomitantly, produce a fast, detailed racing game with excellent graphics and enough variety in the feel of the cars and it doesn't matter if they feel like they're cornering on ice-covered ball bearings (**Ridge Racer**), there's still plenty to do at any moment on that narrow track with the four-to-forty other cars jockeying for position.

Racing sims and flight sims are very different beasts in this one respect; the environment for the former is so well-defined (tracks) that the quality of the actual physics simulation can be let off the hook much more easily than it can be for the latter (think about it: take a driving sim, make it completely off-road, no restrictions on where you can drive or at what angle... is it as much fun now? Hmm...). Turn that around, and it becomes clear that the environment for any flight or air combat sim is so comparatively open-ended that *something* has to be done to give the player focus all along the way, to avoid dead air time (pardon the inevitable pun). Enter modern electronic warfare instruments, flight performance equations, etc. etc. etc. – you know the routine.

Which leads to the Crunch thought that if the environment were loosened up a little more for racing/driving sims, the pressure would likely be on to shoot more carefully for an **IndyCar/NASCAR** approach to actual performance modeling. See if this happens if the current racing craze ever moves off-road. And on the other side, if 3D terrain modeling and the aural/real-time combat environment and battlefield can finally be ramped up, with the technology finally sufficient to the task, perhaps the current obsession with performance parameters will loosen up enough to allow a wider range of realism in flight and air combat designs, without leaving anyone feeling cheated or duped.

And now it *must* be too late in the evening, because I'm suddenly wondering whether we could take all the hardware *off* in air combat the way they've done over in arcade-land with the endless stream of fighter games (**Mortal Kombat 3** rules!), and do some hand-to-hand flight and air combat. Weird. Better go get some hot chocolate. Crunch out.

Steve Wartofsky

Ridge Racer - It isn't realistic at all, but it's damn fun to play

Mortal Kombat 3 - Could hand-to-hand combat in full 3D detail ever take to the skies?

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INITIALS

TED

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Reader Service No. 90

Air Combat Advisor: Intermediate attack skills

Last time we discussed some Attack stage basics. This month we'll discuss more Attack stage considerations.

Quick kill

If it is at all possible, your goal is to end the battle as soon as possible in the Attack stage. This is of course the most preferable because, by allowing the battle to proceed into the Maneuver stage, you increase the length of the battle and with it the chances of the enemy to fight back. Here are some tips to help you reach that goal when facing multiple bandits.

Multiple bandits vs. mission objective

Mixing it up with a single bandit is the least complicated type of battle. You only have one target to shoot at, but more importantly, only one to worry about. Multiple bandit battles are complicated. First and foremost, you need to pick a target. The best target to attack depends on two things. Your mission, and the proximity of your goal/target and threats. For instance, if your mission is to intercept bombers, the bombers should be the focus of your attack. Unfortunately, bombers are rarely sent out without escorts. The decision on whether to engage the escort or the bombers depends on how close the bombers are to their target. If they are far from target, and their escort has strategically worked their way between you and the bomber group, by all means, go after the escort. They'll generally make nuisances of themselves later on, so it is best to get them out of the way if you have the time. On the other hand, if you're on an attack mission, which flight group you should attack depends on your mission role. If you're flying CAP or escort, the enemy flight closest to your strike group should be given your top priority. If you are part of the strike group, the decision to engage the enemy aircraft should be based on your ability to complete your mission and your confidence in your escort and/or the CAP abilities of your fellow pilots.

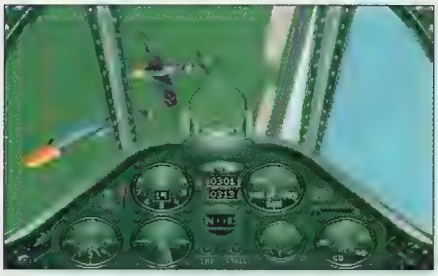
You want to end the battle as soon as possible. This means making the kill during the first attack stage

Pick a winner

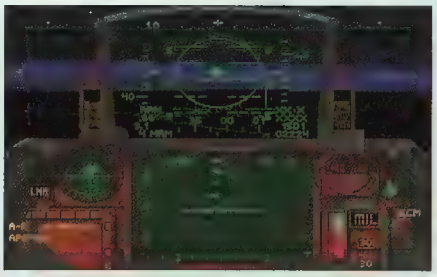
Now that you've picked a flight group, you need to choose an individual bandit to attack. I'll discuss why in a second. Let's talk about which bandit should be targeted. The bandit you want to attack is the best enemy pilot in the flight. New pilots often make a common mistake of going after the worst enemy pilots, looking for quick, easy kills. While they usually get their kills, they soon find the most experienced pilot on their six and more often than not, end up as another kill for the enemy. You want to attack the best pilot when you know where he his (which is usually in front of you at the beginning of an attack) to maximize your chances of taking him out early. You can always sweep up the novice pilots with ease afterwards. However, when attacking bombers, there are some other considerations. We'll talk about those in depth when we cover mission tactics at a later date.

Strike at the head

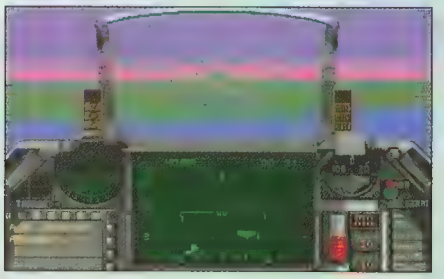
Great, so you know who you want to attack, but how do you find him? Figuring out who the best pilot is isn't an exact science; however, there are some rules of thumb which can guide you. Unfortunately, these rules are somewhat less reliable when you face multiple human opponents than when facing AI opponents. Just as in real life, the most experienced pilot will be



If you don't make the first kill early on, you'll increase the length of the battle, and with it, the chances for the enemy to shoot at you. I didn't kill the flight leader in the initial pass. Now I'm in trouble. You can tell who the better pilot is in this picture (besides myself that is!). The pilot in the lead plane is already in a hard turn while his wing man straggles along making the textbook turn into the enemy

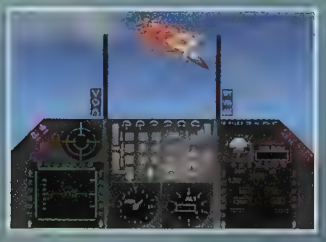


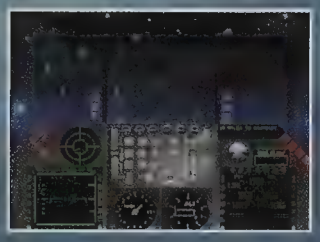
Looks like it's going to be one of those nights. Missiles are in the air... and the enemy is attacking your troops. The blips closest to you are the enemy escort aircraft (MiG-29's). Following close behind them are the TU-22 bombers. Stopping the Bombers is your mission objective, but it looks like you'll have to deal with the MiGs first. You have several options for this scenario. We'll discuss them in the future



The strike group I'm escorting is slightly ahead to the left. The enemy is about 10 miles ahead to the right and a second group about 35 miles ahead. The group to attack is the group that presents the most danger to the strike group. Given the direction of the strike target and flight path of the strike group, the second, more distant group of enemy interceptors may actually reach the strike group first

THE ULTIMATE BATTLE





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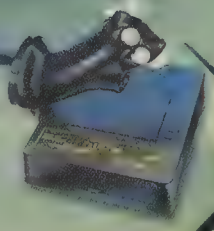

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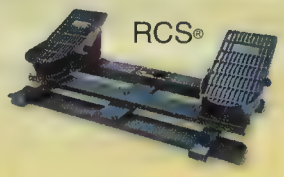

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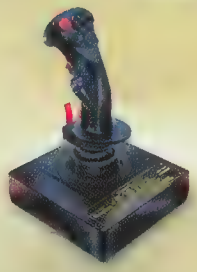

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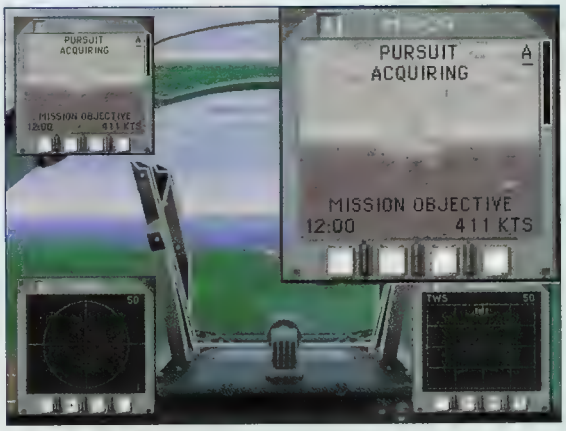


After you've made the decision on which flight group to attack, you must choose an aircraft to target. You want to attack the best pilot first. Unfortunately it isn't always easy to figure out who that is. USNF/USMF removes the guesswork with its Target Window. Not only does it provide aircraft information, but the little dots on the top right hand side give you pilot skill information. Three dots mean "Ace." There are a couple of drawbacks though. Use this window and you won't earn medals and the enemy flight groups usually consist of like skilled pilots. If one's an Ace, they're probably all Aces

the flight leader, and because he is flight leader, will usually occupy the most forward position of a flight formation. This is who you want to attack first. Furthermore, if the target flight group consists of multiple aircraft models, go after the leader of the best (read most dangerous to you) aircraft.

While this first rule of thumb has almost always been correct with almost every AI opponent I've ever encountered, multiple real life opponents generally follow this convention by nature. I don't know whether this is by conscious decision or simply by coincidence, but it does happen more often than not. However, there are those exceptions (especially when facing the better pilots). I can't account for all of the exceptions; however, there are a couple of other rules that apply for human opponents which we'll discuss when we talk more about multiple human opponents.

Stick to it

This brings us to the first of this month's TACA commandments - pick a target and stick with it. That is, of course, until it is shot down or you can't stay with it any longer (which hopefully is due to another enemy pilot hassling you rather than an equipment problem and not a piloting mistake like an unplanned spin. Shame on you!). This is simply because if you keep switching targets before shooting any of them down, you will soon be overwhelmed. It's far better to take out the enemy one by one, than not to get any. If you've got the best pilot in your gun sights, you don't need to worry about him sneaking up on your six and ruining your day.

Attack ASAP

The bonus TACA commandment of the month is to attack first. With guns, this means firing before you're actually within effective weapons range. This really goes hand in hand with being aggressive. The idea is to fire on your target to get him to evade your fire. Your chances of getting a kill is slim at these long distances and, while it would be nice and might be your main goal, getting that bandits gun off of your general direction is almost as valuable. If and when you succeed, you will have succeeded in placing yourself in the highly desirable H2T position. This is because your gun's on him, and his tail (other part of his aircraft) will be facing you, but most importantly, his gun won't be pointed at you. The main thing to look for (besides his wingman), is to keep an eye on your target. It is very easy to lose track of him when you approach, as things happen quickly, and it is not uncommon to get confused while in the heat of battle.

About the Advisor

Some have been wondering just who I am and what my background is. First off, my name is Ben Chiu (pronounced "chew"). In flight school, I was given the call sign Mandarin Duck (No one ever said handles were supposed to be flattering). I was referred to as "The Duck" or "Duck." Today, in flight sim circles, I am known as "Bench." It's based on an old "knock, knock" joke that goes something like this:

"Knock, knock."
"Who's there?"
"Bench."
"Bench who?" Get it? (No one ever said I had to be funny either!)

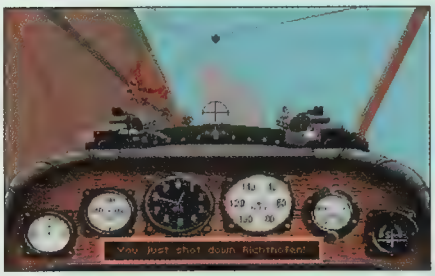
Anyway, I've been around airplanes most of my life. My father was a private pilot. I can remember him taking me up in the family Cessna when I was as young as 3 years old. I always wanted to be a combat pilot, but my less than perfect vision kept me from fulfilling my dream. Nevertheless, I did become a pilot. Most recently, I've passed the written exam for my commercial pilot license, but did not take the commercial pilot flight test due to financial considerations. I've completed all of my commercial pilot training, but chose not get certified when I discovered the large increase in insurance premiums attached to the rating (in a twisted kind of way, that policy actually makes sense). Since my intentions were not to fly for pay (I took the training because I was bored), there was no real reason to complete the exam.

Regardless, I hold single engine, multi-engine and instrument ratings, and have logged hundreds of hours in eleven low and high performance single and multi-engine airplanes. In my best estimation, I have also logged literally thousands of hours in PC flight sims with most of them in air combat.

I am revealing my background fully aware of the "gun fighter syndrome" that accompanies sim air combat pilots. Once you're known as a "quick draw," challengers come out of the woodwork ready to try you out. While I love a good dogfight, realistically, it is impossible for me to take on all comers. The law of averages say that there are better pilots out there than myself, and I am humble enough to believe this to be true. However, on a good day, I will put up a good fight in any case. Maybe I'll run into you up in the unfriendly (figuratively) skies and you'll get your chance! (Hopefully it'll be before I reveal all of my secrets).

Enough about me. Until next time, remember there are three types of on-line combat pilots; those that fly, those that try, and those that cry when they die. Keep flying!

Ben Chiu



The best pilot is always the most dangerous. By taking out Richthofen (The Red Baron) early, the rest of the enemy flight will be relatively easy to mop up

Stick with your target until he won't be a threat any longer. If you keep changing targets, before you shoot any of them down, you'll never get the upper hand

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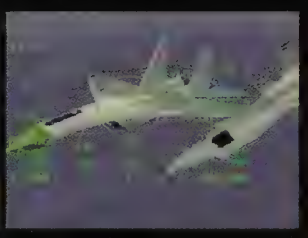

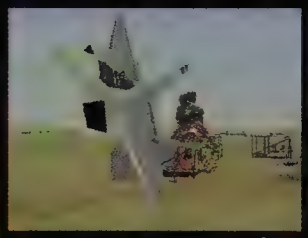

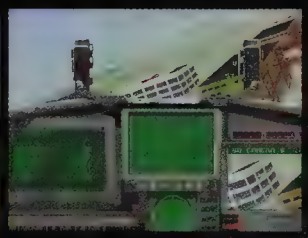

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Flight Simulator Flight Shop

Designed by The Bruce Artwick Organization
Published by The Bruce Artwick Organization
Platform PC with Windows 3.1/95 CD-ROM

Moment of inertia. Pitch stability scalar. Zero lift drag coefficient. If such terms mean nothing to you, turn the page. On the other hand, if you've been waiting all your life for a design system that would let you, the user, in on the process of tweaking such variables in a PC-based flight simulation, read on.

I'll skip the suspense by saying right up front, **Flight Simulator Flight Shop** is one of *the* defining products for the next generation of flight simulation. It's also one of the more challenging pieces of work out there for flight sim enthusiasts. No more whining about whether the included aircraft, etc. are realistic or sufficient. Your turn.

For those who haven't had the opportunity or time to overhear chat about this ongoing project – and it's one of the most ambitious pieces of work ever released by *BAO*, having taken them a couple of years to bring to fruition – **Flight Simulator Flight Shop** is a complete system of serious tools for a) designing any real-world aircraft you'd like to try your hand at for **Flight Simulator 5.0/5.1**; b) fine-tuning both the 3D visuals and the performance parameters for any such already-designed planes either included with the software or found on-line or from a friend; c) creating a sophisticated series of flight "adventures" such as those outlined in the *Flights of Mike* series of books from the experts over at Embry-Riddle; and finally, d) testing out all of the above from within **FS5/5.1**.

FSFS also has the ability to import and convert planes already built with *BAO*'s previous work along these lines, **Aircraft & Adventure Factory**, designed for **FS4**. While **AAF** was a wonderful effort in its time, it left many would-be flight and traffic engineers eager for a system much more realistic in approach, both to flight modeling, aircraft modeling and air traffic control.

With **FSFS**, you can model a plane quite literally from the polygons up. While this might sound like a daunting effort to some – equivalent to, say, sculpting your own P6 out of sand found at the local beach (I exaggerate for effect) – it's not quite as difficult as it seems at first. One of the major benefits of **FSFS**, for instance, is that it provides automation for construction of most of the basic 3D polygonal structures, so that you don't, for instance, have to create and balance every line for the octagonal shape you'll be using for the engine cowls. You provide basic parameters for such a part, call up the right portion of the design system to create the overall shape, and then fine-tune it to spec from the presented object. The benefit of such a system is thus the reusability of parts. If you want to start out with a plane more or less like those included with the software (747-400, T6 Texan, Beech Baron, DC-3, Ultralight and even F/A-18 Hornet – some of these only available on the CD-ROM version), you can import the parts already constructed for those planes and then rework them to fit the model you're presently constructing.

Planning out your aircraft design – preferably with real-world specs, blueprints where available, and some way of translating dimensions from the real object to the 3D designer (a ruler and Revell model will do in a pinch) – is absolutely crucial before you begin

Ditto with the Flight Dynamics Editor. Unlike the visual 3D design system, available only in the Windows environment, the FDE is integrated into **FS5.0/5.1** itself. From within **FS**, you access the FDE to handle overall configuration (main wing, horizontal stabilizer, vertical tail, landing gear), weight and balance, engines, aerodynamics, gear and scrape. The range of parameters for each category goes well beyond those present in **AAF**, giving the user control over such factors as roll moment of inertia, propeller diameter, gear, flap and spoiler coefficient, etc.

The potentially amusing fact about **FSFS** is that the visuals are completely unhooked from the flight dynamics. In other words, to quote a reference in the included documentation, yes, you can make a pig fly. You can theoretically design any 3D shape you'd like, then link it to the proper performance with the FDE and voila! – you have a porker who'll fly circles around a Grob.

Any review of **FSFS** wouldn't be complete without some description of the adventure generator. **FSFS** includes an auto system that will essentially take you through the steps of designing a flight plan, and then filing it with air traffic control, and then flying it with dynamic ATC participation (it's essentially an integration and update of the wonderful tools Robert M. MacKay has provided for **FS** fans for years). All this for any of the included airports in **FS5.0/5.1** and its scenery add-ons. Along with the adventure generator, **FSFS** also provides access to a BASIC-like programming language, so advanced users with some fundamental programming skills can hand-design flight plans and ATC.

For people who've gotten **FS** and played it for a few hours and then wondered what to do with it, **FSFS** will solve the problem quickly and substantially, with literally years of possibilities built in. For advanced **FS** users, **FSFS** goes the distance and gives serious designers the tools they need to participate in the process of perfecting the very real interest in serious – and realistic – civilian flight simulation on the PC. On *CompuServe* alone, FSFORUM will probably triple in size soon after the release of **FSFS**; at least twenty or more participants there are chomping at the bit, ready to design and upload the planes of their dreams. Gentlemen, start your engines!

Steve Wartofsky

Don't even try to count the number of surfaces present on this wonderful 747-400; something over 300 parts have been designed to put this bird together in FSFS. Fortunately, not all of the lines were drawn and measured by hand!

If you can find a more realistic dogfight simulator, fly it.

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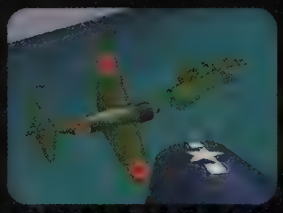

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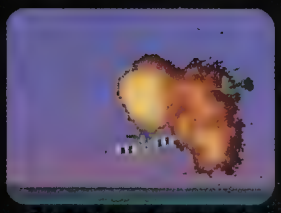

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Reader Service No. 114

Interactive Sailing

Designed by Swfte
Published by Swfte
Platform Windows

Swfte's **Interactive Sailing** takes on a very difficult task; trying to simulate as organic and holistic a sport as sailing on a digital machine. While we admire them for trying, the results are uneven at best. **Interactive Sailing** runs under Windows and uses multimedia glitz to add to the value of the package.

For total newcomers to the sport of sailing, the product is a wonderfully gentle introduction. Video clips of the J/105 guide the player through the layout of the rigging, sailing techniques, starting tactics and other somewhat advanced topics. The shortcoming, of course, is that every boat is rigged differently. Unless you happen to be going out on a J/105, the rigging for your particular craft will only vaguely resemble that shown in **Interactive Sailing**.

The game side of **Interactive Sailing** features a race. Players can choose from three courses, set the wind conditions, and choose whether they want to simply skipper the J/105, or handle all the crew chores as well. The race screen features a 3D window and a chart of the course showing each ship's position and bearing.

The biggest problem with the racing game is what *isn't* in it. The boats don't heel much, if at all, rules of the road are announced ("Captain, we don't have the right of way!" cries the crew's voice) but not enforced. No penalties are inflicted for breaking any rules.

Your opponents make for pathetic competition. I am by no means an accomplished sailor, but still managed to win my second race, handling the rigging myself and against the highest difficulty opponents, by over three minutes. Sadly, there are no multiplayer options.

Still, if you've no idea what sailing is all about and are interested to learn, then **Interactive Sailing** is for you. It ignores the details and covers the broad strokes. But if you know your way around a boat you'll be dismayed by the ease of consistently sailing to a win. Maybe *Swfte* can be persuaded to produce an advanced version, with multiplayer races over a network. Now *that* would be a great way to spend those afternoons when you're becalmed and sitting on the beach!

Peter Smith

Sail '95

Designed by Grant McCardell
Published by Vivid Simulations
Systems Windows

Your first impression of *Vivid Simulation*'s **Sail '95** is going to be a negative one. Let's get this out in the open right now, this simulation is a bear to install. It requires you to be running Windows in 1024x768 mode, and for you to have 10 megs of virtual memory free. Once you run the install, the program will generate something like 1500 separate graphics files, a process that will eat up several megs of hard disk space and take a half hour or so of your time.

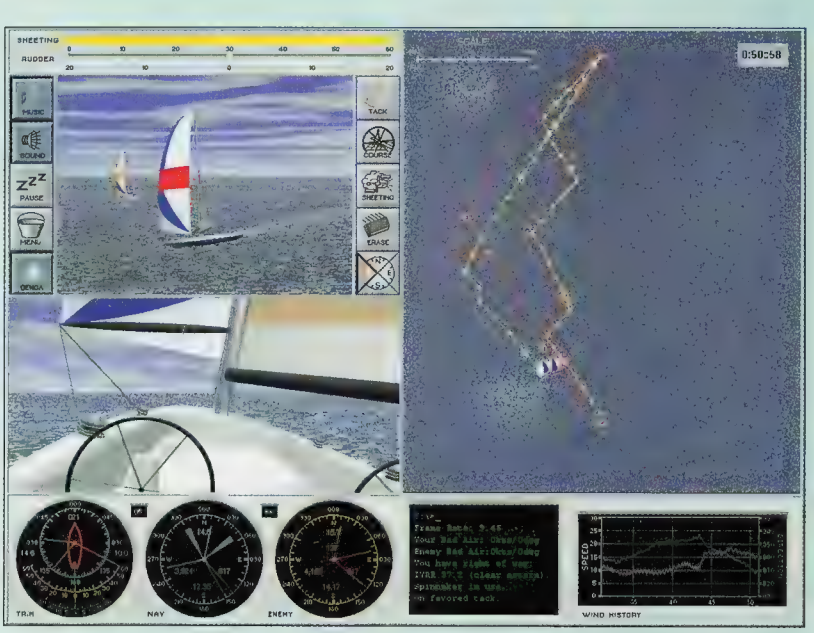
Once you get through all of that, though, you'll find a worthwhile sailing simulator hogging up Windows (trust us, you don't want to have anything running in the background while playing **Sail '95**). *Vivid* claims **Sail '95** is "The Official Simulator of the 1995 America's Cup," and as such it is quite focused. There is only a single opponent and a single type of boat to race (presumably America's Cup class). You can, however, choose from several courses, adjust the wind to suit your fancy, set the racing ability of your opponent.

The competition is tough. Your opponent will exploit any mistake you make, and will very aggressively work to "dirty your air.." He'll also exploit the rules of the road in order to force you off your intended path. The rules of sailboat racing are enforced. If you hit a mark, or cause a collision, you'll have to do penalty 360s as penance.

There are a few places where *Vivid* has simplified the handling of your vessel. The mainsail and jib (or spinnaker) are controlled by a single line. If your boat heels 25 degrees, your crew will automatically reef sails to keep it from going any farther over (which alleviates the need to check for capsizing, at any rate). You can also let the crew handle the lines, if you prefer.

Sailing on the PC is an acquired taste. There are long periods of minor adjustments and watching the race that become semi-boring, followed by an adrenaline rush as you round the mark in close proximity to your opponent (similar to the rhythm of air combat simulation, in some ways). But then, this just reflects reality. Anyone who's watched the televised America's Cup coverage will know what we're talking about. In all, though, once you get this monster installed, it will provide plenty of challenge, and a very authentic feeling of sailboat racing. If you're serious about sailing, this is the sim for you.

Peter Smith



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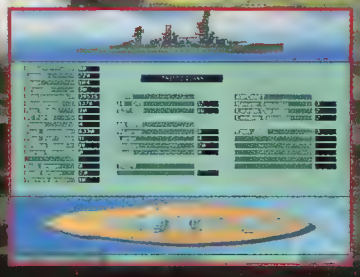

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Reader Service No. 141

Flight Unlimited Part II: handling stick and rudder

FU is the most rudder intensive sim around

Before we move on to discussing specific maneuvers, there still are a couple of other general tips we should cover. The one flight control which gives new and experienced sim pilots the most difficulty is the rudder. Granted, it seems unnatural to steer with your feet after years of driving and the conditioning of steering with your hands on a wheel is hard to un-learn, but don't give up just yet. It can be done!

Da' Rudder

Flight Unlimited (**FU**) is the most rudder intensive flight sim around. Not only do you need to be pumping away on it constantly, you have to be accurate with it, too. Now with our discussion of the rudder, it should be clear we are talking about the operation of the rudder using a rudder pedal controller and *not the keyboard*. If you don't have a set of rudder pedals and you're serious about flying **FU** or some other flight sim well, do yourself a favor and get a set. Both *Thrustmaster* and *CH Products* make excellent units. Using a second joystick for rudder control can be done, but the keyboard is definitely at the bottom of the list. It just makes your job much more tedious and difficult than it needs to be.

Rudder workout

The next big stumbling block sim'ers need to get over has to do with the actual amount of physical movement rudder pedals require. Of course some pedals require more than others, but all of us can't help but feel self conscious when we first realize how much rudder throw there is. The proper use of a rudder requires quite a bit of body English, something many have never encountered before (never mind doing it in front of a computer with wife looking on!). Real-life aerobatic flying requires quite a bit of physical movement. Much more than a casual observer realizes. I like to use the example of the Formula One race car driver. If you watched the race from a spectator point of view, what you'd see are the cars driving around the track with relative ease. The drivers make racing seem so smooth and easy, one might think it would be a pleasant experience. In reality, the driver is in a cramped, hot, dirty environment getting his bones rattled. The spectator usually never sees the pedal dance that goes on inside an F1 cockpit. This is pretty much what goes on with aerobatic flying. Don't worry what you look like to the guy in the next cubical or to your significant other. Just move the pedals as much as you need to.

Which way is up?

Anyone who's fooled around with an airplane rudder knows that it mainly controls yaw, although rudder-only turns are possible. You press the same pedal as the direction you want the nose to turn in. To move the nose to the right, you press the right pedal, and vice versa.

This is straightforward and simple when you're upright and level. What happens when you're on the side or inverted is what tends to confuse people.

When you're flying knife-edge (wings perpendicular to the ground), your rudder is now in the same position your elevator used to be in. This means when applying top rudder (top in relation to the ground), your airplane will respond as if you were applying up elevator from an upright and level position.

That is pretty intuitive. What happens when you're inverted is another story, however. Let's look at a slow roll to the left. Most aerobatic planes feature symmetrical or semi-symmetrical airfoils. This is so the aircraft will fly pretty much the same upside down as it will right side up. With airfoils of this type, since either side of the airfoil will produce the same lift, the only way to keep the wing flying (counteract gravity) is to increase its angle of attack. This is why you need to keep your nose

Cut power at a high airspeed and your nose will dip to the right in a clockwise rotating prop airplane

Cut power while at a high airspeed in a Sukhoi and the nose will drop to the left because the prop rotates counter-clockwise

If you continue a left hand roll, while inverted, left rudder is now the top rudder

above the horizon or you will lose altitude.

You begin the roll to the left by applying left aileron. As you start to roll, to keep the nose above the horizon; you need to apply top (right) rudder, since it now acts like the elevator. Once inverted, your elevator works like an elevator again (only opposite – down is up and up is down) and your rudder returns to working like a rudder again so none is needed. The transition from inverted to upright again requires top rudder to keep the nose above the horizon. The problem is that even though the roll is still to the left using left aileron, right rudder is no longer top rudder. Left rudder is. This is because the designation "top" is based on its relation to the ground. Think about it and it'll make sense.

How much rudder

Now that you know which rudder pedal to push, the question becomes, how much rudder do you need to use? Well – not to sound like a wise guy – but the answer is as much as you need to to obtain the desired results. It's a question no one can really answer; however, here are some guidelines. The amount of rudder you need depends on three things: how far you want to move the nose, your airspeed and your power setting.

Naturally, the more you move the rudder, the greater effect it will have. In other words, the more rudder you apply, the more the nose will move. However, the faster your airspeed, the more effective and sensitive it will be. Inversely, the slower your airspeed, the more ineffective and softer it will become. If you wanted to move the nose of your airplane say 3 degrees to the right, at a high airspeed, it may only take 1/4 right rudder. At a slow airspeed, it may take full right rudder to achieve the same results.

Other rudder uses

The third variable is your power setting in relation to your airspeed. There are four possible situations which need to be dealt with. High power/high airspeed, high power/low airspeed, low power/high airspeed, and low power/low airspeed. In each of these situations you must deal with torque effects and gyroscopic precession. While gyroscopic precession along with P-factor (propeller disk asymmetric loading) and propwash are considered responsible for torque effect, I listed it separately since it causes other problems we should talk about.

A spinning prop has the same properties of a gyroscope. The gyroscope resists any effort to tilt its axis (or plane of rotation). If you think of a gyro as a toy top, if you tried to push it over while it is spinning on the floor, it would instead move parallel to the plane of rotation (across the floor). This property is known as rigidity in space. The property of precession is illustrated when a force is exerted against the side of the rotating gyro. The gyro will react as if the force were exerted at a point 90 degrees around the wheel (in the direction of rotation) from the actual place of application. This means in a clockwise-rotating-prop airplane (when viewed from the cockpit), a sudden climb will cause the nose of the airplane to turn to the right. Conversely, a sudden dive would produce a turn to the left. Note that in both of these examples sudden control inputs produce gyroscopic precession effects. The smooth application of control inputs usually hides gyroscopic precession effects, due to the greater torque effects which prevail.

Torque an' propwash

Torque effects are most noticeable when you transition from low to high power and from high to low power. The more abrupt the transition, the more noticeable these effects will be. When you factor in airspeed, a transition to high power at a low airspeed and low power at a high airspeed require the most rudder correction, but this depends on the design of the airplane. A clockwise turning (from the cockpit) propeller causes a rotating mass of air to be accelerated *toward* the tail of the airplane. This air mass, called a "slipstream" or "propwash," strikes the left side of the vertical fin and rudder and causes the airplane to yaw to the left. Some manufacturers use an offset fin to counteract this reaction. This offset fin setting is usually for maximum effectiveness at the rated cruising speed. This explains why an airplane will fly straight on full power and veer off to the right if you abruptly remove power.

We've run out of space again, so we'll continue next time. Until then, which rudder pedal you'll need to push depends on which way the engine rotates and which situation you're in. All of the engines in **FU** rotate clockwise (from the cockpit) except for the Sukhoi, which rotates counter-clockwise. Make note of the different results.

Ben Chiu

Airplanes with semi-symmetrical or symmetrical airfoils require the nose to remain above the horizon when flying level

US Marine Fighters

In my toughest Sgt. Slaughter D.I. impression, I begin yelling at the top of my lungs... "ATTENTION!! All right you pond scum sucking maggots! For the next two pages, I will be your instructor and will train you to become **U.S. Marine Fighters** (**USMF**) that will strike fear into the hearts of your enemies!"

Well, that's enough of that. Seriously, *Electronic Arts'* has combined the popular **U.S. Navy Fighters** (**USNF**) with the **USMF** expansion disk and released it together on one CD-ROM as **U.S. Navy Fighters Gold** (**USNFG**). This package also includes the latest patch that supersedes **USNF** version 1.1. While part of this patch fixes some bugs, it does also add some new features. Since **USNF** has been around for a while and many articles have been written about it already, we'll limit our discussion to these new features and **USMF** specifics.

Sometimes you don't have any choice, but keep in mind that you don't always need to select an airplane that is 100% operational. Also, be aware that you don't earn medals and promotions if you use USNF aircraft in the USMF campaigns and vice versa

Frame game

If you've played **USNF** before (or any of the latest generation of flight sims for that matter), the concept of frame rate will be nothing new to you. Since **USMF** is an add on (based on the same engine), you can expect comparable frame rates - with all of the detail turned on, it will bring even the fastest processors made down to its knees. While frame rates are subjective (some people claim "smooth as silk" frame rates with a P90 at the highest resolution with all details on), with **USNFG** and **USMF** you can now press <CTRL-F> and the current frame rate will be displayed. Personally, a frame rate of 10 per second is about as low as I like to get, although 8 frames per second is my very bottom limit. You may have a higher tolerance than I, but the deciding factor should be aircraft response. If you find yourself over controlling your aircraft, chances are your frame rate is too low.

Copy copy

When you start a campaign, the most important thing to do is make a copy of your pilot. Doing this essentially acts as making a backup of your pilot. This is very important to do so that, if you exit a campaign by mistake after your pilot augers in, you can restore where you left off. Just remember to copy/backup your pilot often.

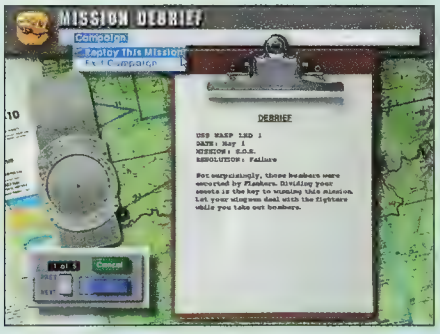
Pick-a-plane

After accepting and reviewing a mission, you'll next be asked to select an airplane. There are three things to keep in mind here. First, the airplane recommended in the briefing is always a good choice. Second, you don't always need to choose an aircraft that is 100% operational. And finally, **USMF** adds 4 new aircraft (AV-8B Harrier II, Sea Harrier, Yak-141, and the AC-130U) and the Kurile Islands campaign. While you can fly these new **USMF** aircraft in the Ukraine theater, and **USNF** aircraft in Kurile theater, by doing so you won't earn any medals or promotions.

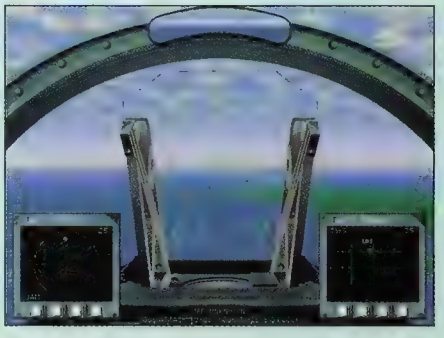
Chance ordnance

Read your mission briefing thoroughly. The default ordnance loads do not match the recommended loads many times. Also, a few of the missions don't require everything that is recommended. While studying the mission briefing and knowing your weapons will help a lot, there is

Always check the default ordnance load as it doesn't always contain what you'll need. When in doubt, take it with you. You can always "drop it off" on the enemy later



If you fail a mission, pay attention to the debrief as it provides useful information to help you complete it if you want to try it again



Tell your wingman to attack a target and your alter ego will magically be able to tell what the target is

Copy/backup your pilot frequently or you may be stuck starting over from the beginning

really no way to know exactly what you'll need on the mission until you fly it. Until you do actually fly it, you can only take along your best guess as to what you'll need. The main thing to be worried about is being caught short of the proper weapons halfway through the mission. If you're in doubt, take it along with you. You can always drop it off somewhere (hopefully on the enemy) if you need to.

Big windows

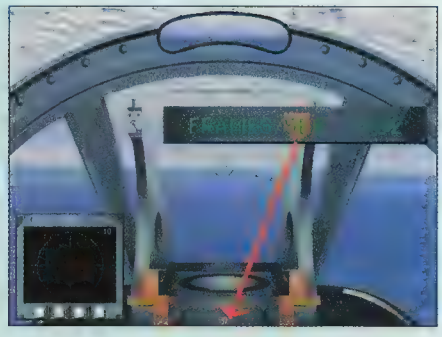
No, that isn't the next incarnation of a *Microsoft* operating system. **USNFG** now offers a large window option. In the higher resolution modes, the view windows became pretty small. With the new option checked, it'll make larger, more legible windows.

RWR, what you are

Some of the symbols on RWR (Radar Warning Receiver) have changed to provide more information. A diamond indicates aircraft using radar, a big square indicates ground based radar, and small squares indicate missile. If any of these are "lit up," they're tracking you. The one exception is with missiles you have fired. They'll light up for as long as they're tracking your target. You can distinguish them from incoming missiles by the direction they're traveling. If they're flying toward the center of the RWR, do something about it. You're defensive!

Replay...again

There isn't any doubt that you will get shot down or fail a mission some time. It's just a fact of flight sims. However, **USNFG** allows you to replay these missions. When you do, pay particular attention to the debriefing as it provides precious clues on how to complete the mission. Just remember, if your pilot gets killed, choose to replay the mission again even if you want to quit for the day.



<CTRL-F> will display the current frame rate

Other wise your pilot will be killed for good. All is not lost though if you remembered to copy your pilot as we discussed earlier.

If you're not cheating - you're not trying

USNFG will not allow you to earn medals or promotions if you use the "cheater" target window <SHIFT-4>. While some argue that the target window makes up for the lack of AWACs and real life eye resolution, most pilots (and obviously **USNFG** designers) consider this cheating. Well, one way to get around this limitation is to make maximum use of your alter ego's superior eyesight. Designate the target in question and command your wingman to attack it. If it's an enemy, your message displayed to him will indicate what the exact target is even though you/it couldn't possibly see it. The best part is that you'll still be eligible for medals and promotions! This method won't provide you with all of the information that the target window would such as its activity, skill, goal and damage, but it is very useful for figuring out who your biggest threats are and/or who the bombers are. Don't worry if you designate a friendly target by mistake. Your wingman knows better than to attack friendlies.

Main terrain

If you turn down terrain detail to minimum, all of the mountains will disappear. This makes some missions much easier. However, while it makes targets easier to find, it also makes you an easier target for SAMS and AAA, so beware.

VTOL et al

USMF contains VTOL (Vertical Take Off and Landing) aircraft. The manual provides enough information to learn to fly them, however there are a couple of things you should know. Number one is you cannot do vertical take offs with a fully loaded aircraft. It just doesn't have the thrust. Number two is that VTOL aircraft aren't super fast and at first may not seem to turn very well either. You can decrease your turning radius if you use your vector nozzles to your advantage while turning. However, don't try using more than about -60 ° or you'll end up bleeding off too much speed. Finally, when landing, you cannot spin a VTOL aircraft if you have at least -45 ° of vector angle.

AC-130U

The AC-130U is basically a cargo plane with a few big guns on it. What's kind of odd about it is that the guns are all aiming at a 45 degree angle off the port side of the fuselage. It was designed so you could circle around a ground target in a counter clockwise direction and shoot at it. Well, as you can imagine, this configuration doesn't make it very useful for air to air combat. However, once you know where it shoots from and where it's aiming, it is usable. From the pilot's seat, the guns fire at a 10 o'clock angle. Fly along the starboard side of the target aircraft and fire away. Don't forget to pray also as you'll need the help.

Other tidbits

Another important addition to **USNFG** is the " ; " (semi-colon) key. This sets your target designator to nothing. While you have the option to manually designate targets using a mouse (or *Thrustmaster* **TQS** trackball), reaching for your mouse isn't always convenient (although the **TQS** trackball is very convenient it's tough to do in a knife fight). The target nothing key will let you change target designation so you can designate another specific target even if it doesn't show up on your radar. Rather than cycle through the current targets, you now have the option to first target nothing, then designate the new target using the target visible object closest to center of screen key " ' " (apostrophe). This option is a more efficient.

USMF's Kurile campaign is definitely tougher than the Ukraine, but hopefully you now have an edge. Now get out there and make me proud, but first... "drop and give me 20 pushups!" "One, two, three, four, I love the Marine Corps!"

Ben Chiu

Apache: the Combat Helicopter Simulation: Intermediate, Part 3

In continuing with our discussions of **Apache : The Combat Helicopter Simulation**, here are some intermediate concepts and tips.

Ship ahoy!

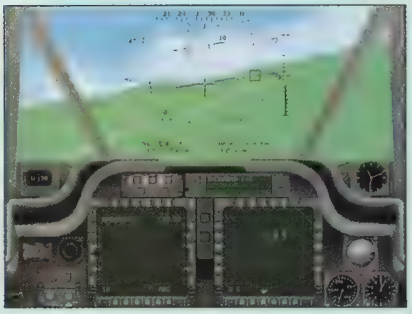
From a psychological standpoint, landing at the mock carrier test airfield with a crosswind is easier than landing on the deck of the Tarawa because you don't have to worry about crashing into one of the superstructures on deck or falling over the edge. In reality, even though the "obstacles" and crosswinds may not be the same, there really isn't any difference. Just as with any landings, the approach is key. Make a bad approach, and your landing will be more difficult (if not impossible) to perform.

Let's discuss some of the details. First off, you need to find the carrier. Since the carrier is moving, and your landing waypoint is fixed, the carrier will not always be in the exact spot the waypoint depicts. The waypoint will only indicate the general area. You will still need to pick out the carrier among the other ships. The easiest way to do this is to use your radar and lock on to the Tarawa (just don't pull the trigger!), then follow the target vector right to it. Next, always make your approach from the rear. Sounds simple, but you'd be surprised how many new pilots don't realize that the carrier is moving. Second, don't try and hover. Speed is relative to something (e.g. air, ground, etc.). Since the Tarawa is moving, if you match the speed of the carrier you will appear to be hovering in relation to it. However, to approach the carrier, you will need to be flying faster than the carrier. A comfortable approach would be to fly toward the carrier at 75' MSL at a constant 40KPH. As you get very close to your chosen landing pad, slow to 22-25 knots and reduce collective. When you do, you will need to apply forward stick to maintain airspeed. Use rudder to maintain forward orientation and cyclic to over come side to side motion. Once you hit the deck, apply brakes. Simple, but it takes practice.

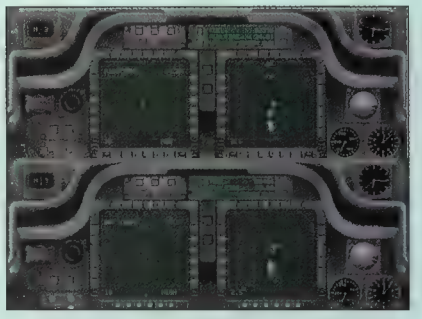
Air threats

It's debatable which threats (ground or air) are more deadly in **Apache**. According to my experiences, when the enemy logic is set to the lower levels, ground threats pose more of a problem than the rather anemic air threats. However, at the highest enemy AI level, air threats in my opinion are unrealistically deadly. Numerous enemy aircraft seem to pop up out of nowhere as soon as you get the "mission complete" audio message. Not only do they carry extraordinary weapons loads, to make matters worse, they're all targeting me! While it is challenging, to say the least, and may sound like "belly aching," I've been able to complete most missions at this level, so it is possible to compete.

Damaged and landing on the Tarawa at night after a successful mission is challenging, but satisfying. The key is to not try and hover. Just fly a constant heading at 22-25 knots and when in position, let down



The enemy sure protects their SCUDs well. In addition to the AAA, an IR missile has been fired (with more to follow - trust me!). Check the direction on the TSD and turn into the missile. Apply countermeasures and make a hard 90° turn. Finish off by applying countermeasures after the turn



You'd never see the M109 Howitzer (the top radar screen) if your radar mask was set to "high" as in the bottom radar screen. Read the mission briefing so you know what your target is

Defensive strategies

There are two general strategies regarding any threat, and in order to survive and be successful, you will have to learn and make use of both of them. One of which we discussed a little last time is to try and not be seen. If they can't see you, they can't shoot at you (or at least hit you as they proved in Baghdad a few years ago). The second is to take out the threat before it can take you out. Ever heard the saying "the best defense is a good offense? " This is the same idea. Let's talk some more about each as well as how to evade missiles and SAMs.

Countermeasures

In most sims, ECM (Electronic Counter Measures) can be tracked by the enemy. **Apache** has what is called automatic ECM mode. There isn't much written about it or whether or not it can be tracked in auto mode, Mike Chen from *Interactive Magic* says that if you turn it off, it makes it harder for the enemy to see you. I've tried it either way, but haven't noticed any difference. I suppose it doesn't hurt to turn it off as long as you remember to turn it on when needed.

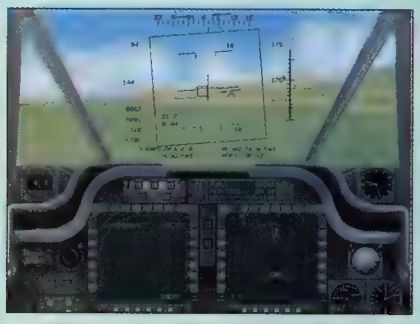
Missiles and SAM evasion

While we're on the subject, let's skip ahead to missile and SAM evasion. Of course, avoiding missile fire in the first place is preferable, sometimes despite your best efforts, the enemy will fire one off at you. While SAMs are considered ground threats, since SAM evasion techniques are virtually identical to missile evasion, I delayed their discussion until now to avoid repeating material. Regardless of the ECM auto/manual controversy, I can tell you that I do notice a difference when I set the other countermeasures (chaff and flares) to manual. Without going into any details of how missiles track and the theories involved with evasion, let's talk nuts and bolts. An Apache helicopter doesn't fly fast enough for you to out turn missiles with any regularity, so you need to use standard missile evasion tactics.

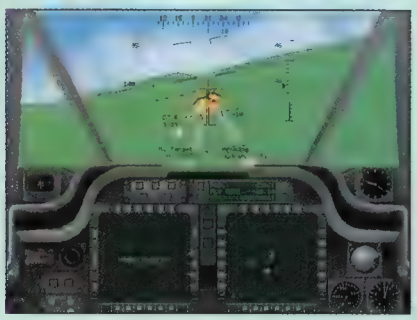
The first order of business is to determine where the missile is. **Apache**'s communications data panel will list the incoming missiles time to impact. Also, the TSD (Tactical Situation Display) can provide direction information. If you have to time to perform it, the best method of spoofing missiles fired at you is to do the following. Turn directly into the direction of the missile. Drop countermeasures (I've got my *Thrustmaster* **FLCS** programmed to drop chaff and flares with one button press) and turn on ECM if you have it in manual mode. (Note: while flares won't work for radar guided missiles and chaff and ECM won't do diddly with IR missiles, you rarely have time to decipher which is appropriate, so just drop both. Don't worry about conserving your countermeasure stores, 10 chaff and 15 flares left over are of no value to you if you get killed before you use them.) Immediately after applying countermeasures, make a 90 ° turn in any direction. However, be aware that if you decide to turn into a steep climb (which technically can be considered a 90 ° turn) you will attract other weapons fire as you will now be easier to spot by the enemy due to your increased altitude. As a final measure, drop countermeasures a second time. Check the TSD and see if the missile is still tracking you. If it is, better try the procedure again!

The above is a best case scenario. You will undoubtedly at some point have missiles or SAMs fired at you when you don't have time to perform all of the procedures. At the very minimum, drop countermeasures and turn hard 90 ° from your present heading, then drop countermeasures again.

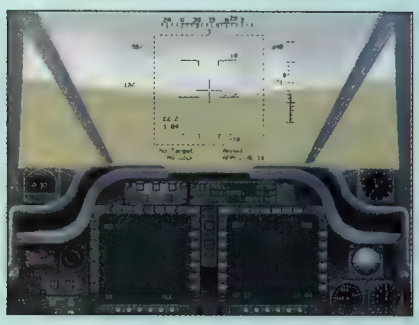
Pay attention to what targets you need to hit and adjust your ordnance to fit the mission and your fighting style. Since you have an endless supply, why not take along the more capable "B" Hellfire (radar guided) when ever possible?



"B" Hellfires are have a longer range and are "fire and forget." They are effective against slower air targets such as Super Cobra helicopters and can lock on enemy before the enemy can lock on you



Learning to fire weapons (such as the rockets illustrated here) with your radar off is an important skill to learn



As long as your aircraft datum (the "cross" in the center of the IHADSS) remains over the horizon, you will never hit the ground. That is, if you are flying forward!

On the offensive

Planning is very important when preparing for a mission. First and foremost, know that the enemy is colored brown, and friendlies are green. Study the manual and learn which aircraft and ground units are strictly enemy only (like the SCUD). This will allow you to bypass risky visual inspections before shooting some targets. The use of radar masking can help sort out the confusing display, however, be aware that you will never see your intended target of D30 artillery or trucks, for example, if you stay at the high masking setting.

Which weapons

Another important consideration is your weapons load. Read your mission briefing carefully. Your targets will dictate which ordnance is appropriate. One tip that actual Apache pilot Rex Swetman passed along is to choose B (Bravo) version of the Hellfire missiles instead of the A (Alpha) version. This is a good tip for several reasons. The Bravo has a longer range (5.5 miles vs. 3 mile Stingers), is radar guided, is "fire and forget" and last but not least, can be used against slower air targets.

Rocket ranger

While it may seem obvious to lock on to a target before using rockets to take advantage of the automatic pod elevation, learn to fire rockets manually. It's a handy skill if you fly with radar off or if it becomes damaged.

Fun gun

The 30mm chain gun in **Apache** is awesome. It is the weapon of choice for very close, tightly packed enemy targets. Although the gun range is listed as 4,500', you can take out targets as far away as 6,000'.

Obscured vision

Since the enemy rightfully doesn't want to get shot at, it hides behind things like trees and buildings resulting in obscured targets. Rather than waste missiles on these obstacles, use the chain gun on them to clear the way. Take advantage of the fact that the enemy isn't smart enough to know that the trees in **Apache** are explosive.

Mountain high

Some sim'ers have complained that there isn't enough terrain graphics around in order to judge just how high you are flying. (Could their altimeters be out of order?) One tip that I can pass along is to watch where you place the aircraft datum over the horizon when climbing over mountains. As long as that datum is over the horizon (and you're flying forward), you'll never hit the ground.

Ben Chiu

MechWarrior 2

Part III - A Call to Trial

"...And in that year, the betrayer-who-once-led-us-all came to deceive the Wolf, perverting the Clan of Kerensky and enlisting it in his vile scheme to destroy the Falcon and forever deny the people their rightful destiny."

- The Remembrance (Clan Jade Falcon). Passage 533, verse 12, lines 22-24.

Starmates

As you progress in your career as a MechWarrior, you will be given opportunities to prove your ability to handle ever-increasing responsibility. The tasks you will be expected to perform will be more complex, as well as more important to the Clan's well-being. As such, you may be placed in command of other MechWarriors. While those placed under you may sometimes be newly-graduated cadets, they will usually be older veterans who have passed their prime as warriors and have failed to die in combat. For these men and women, their only hope is to die on the battlefield before age weakens their abilities to the point that they fail to test out and are released to some lower caste. It will be your task to take these disparate individuals and use them as tools to serve the needs of the Clan.

One must know the abilities of those he is to lead if one is to be an effective leader. For the most part, these pilots will have adequate skills to accomplish the task at hand. You may find them tactically deficient, preferring a slugging match to a game of hide-and-seek (Fig. 1). Their targeting skills are usually excellent on slow or non-moving targets, but they have a great deal of trouble handling high-speed crossing targets. If you assign a slow-moving wingman the task of bringing down a Jenner or a Firemoth, be prepared to wait for a good long while. On the other hand, if you have the time, it can be an enjoyable source of entertainment.

On their behalf, I will state that you will find them to be excellent pilots. They seldom blunder into structures, and rarely overheat. The problem is that they often follow your instructions a bit too eagerly. For instance, if you assign a target to your wingman and the target maneuvers to a point where it is between your wingman and some vital structure, the wingman will happily blast away regardless of the risk to the structure. This is not a good thing in this situation, you would do well to order your wingman to protect the structure above all else.

Starmate control

One problem you will encounter is that in the heat of battle it can be very difficult to keep track of your starmates, much less give them intelligent orders. For this reason, your BattleMech is equipped with a command system which allows you to transmit pre-generated orders over a scrambled, tight-beamed comlink. This allows you to assign a target, and have the coordinates automatically loaded into your subordinate's targeting computer, without using imprecise, and often misunderstood, speech.

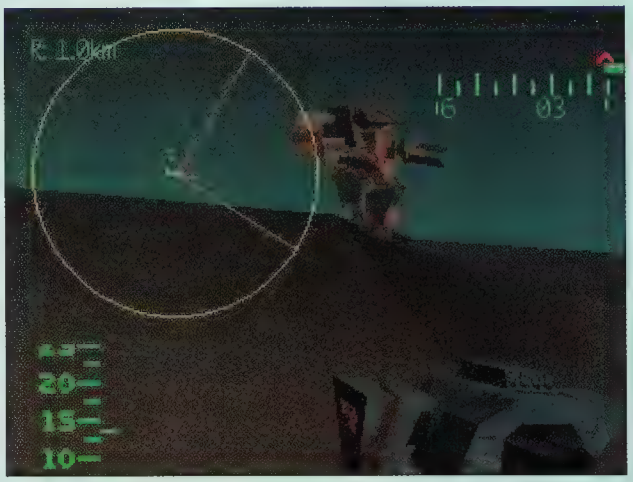


Figure 2: To decrease fumbling when you need to issue orders, you might leave your command menu on-screen at all times. Eventually, you get used to it

The problem with this communication system is that the Technician Caste has put it in an extremely inconvenient location. Finding the <Ctrl>-1, 2, or 3 keys in the heat of combat can be quite difficult. If you find that this is hampering your effectiveness in the field, I suggest that you try leaving the command screen on in your HUD at all times (Fig. 2). After some practice, you will have no trouble fighting "through" the menu. If you try this, remember that you will be giving up the ability to use the number keys to set your mech's speed.

Team tactics

Leading a team in combat is an entirely different experience from simply going it alone. As a star commander, you must ensure that your performance is consistent with the highest standards, and you must get the most out of your starmates as well. This can be accomplished only if you are aware of the talents of the average Clan MechWarrior.

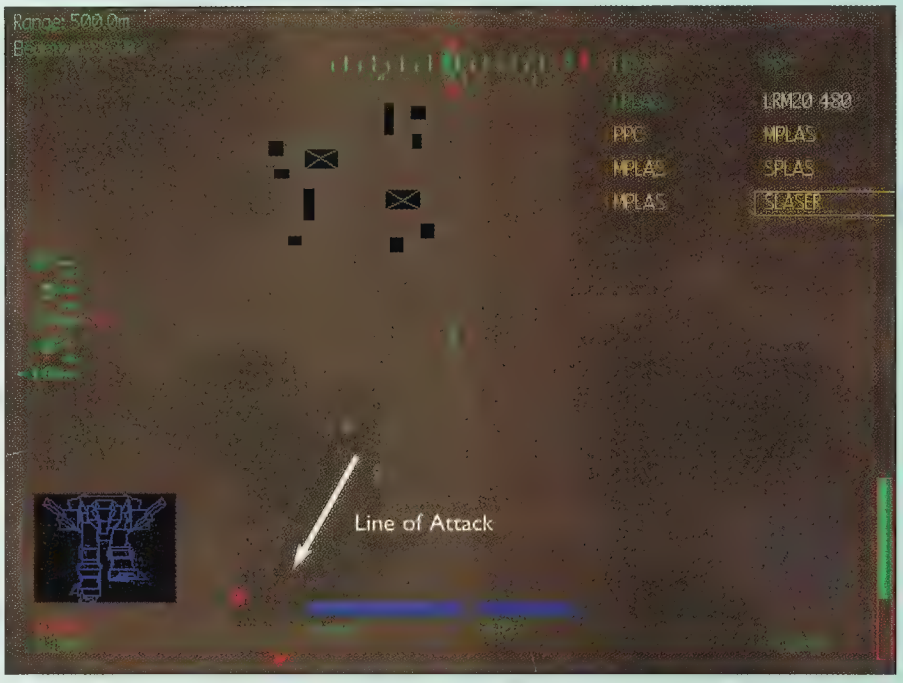


Figure 1: Not the best spot to be in: Notice how my starmates are out in the open, slugging it out with vastly superior BattleMechs. At least they're keeping the Warhawk occupied

Table 1: Orders to Starmates

Situation	Orders
General Melee	Engage At Will
Defending item	Target item and issue Defend Target
Destroying item	Target item and issue Attack Target, or issue
Engage at	Will and destroy target yourself
Avoiding Combat	Join Formation or Disengage and Reform

Figure 3: From a V-formation, I can assign targets and pick up on what my starmates miss

For instance, any warrior under your command will be capable of dueling an enemy battlemech, and will probably win. It will take that individual a considerably longer time to do this than it might take a superior combatant, as has been previously described. The problem comes in situations where you must strike and move quickly. You will be fighting the clock while your partners are still off dueling their opponents (Fig. 3). To make matters worse, they can get so caught up in their individual struggles that they forget the importance of the mission and refuse your call to rejoin your formation. That kind of rash emotionalism is to be avoided, but not all warriors are up to the task, and this is why many of these individuals have not advanced in rank by now. Therefore, think of the following before assigning a target to a wingman:

- Can I kill this target quicker than my subordinate? The answer to this is almost always yes. If the target must be destroyed in order to successfully complete your mission, then you are better off doing it yourself.
- If I engage this opponent, are my mission objectives jeopardized? If so, you must reassess the opponent need be engaged at all. If you can't avoid combat, assigning the target to your wingman may indeed give you the breathing room to complete your mission. Remember, you can't complete your mission if you don't survive, so do not hesitate to sacrifice your starmates to keep yourself on track.
- Can my subordinate complete this assignment? You will find that most of the time the answer to this is yes. The key is knowing the proper orders to give to keep your people from doing anything stupid. The accompanying table will provide some guidance on how to get the most out of your troops (Table 1).

The average pilot under your command will probably not be as fast, smart, and heroic as you. If they exhibited gunnery or piloting skills superior to yours, they would be in charge, quiaff? About the only thing they are really good at is avoiding fire. More than once I have come back from a mission with a barely functional mech while my wingman's machine is still in pristine condition. This is in part due to the fact that enemy pilots will single out a star's commander for destruction in the hopes of breaking the unit's cohesiveness. With that in mind, you should select starmate mechs that are a bit heavier in firepower and perhaps a little slower and lighter in armor than you might normally select for yourself. Mad Dogs are always a good choice, although I often break my own rule and outfit my wingmen with the Marauder. It gives me a handy firebase to run to if my Stormcrow starts to take too much damage.

Situational awareness

A few words on the concept of situational awareness. I am sure some of you have noticed the tendency of Falconer Greel to appear out of nowhere to administer well-deserved beatings for not studying more diligently, usually when you think yourselves hidden from his view. Falconer Greel is demonstrating for you his situational awareness. This can best be described as his ability to know when a cadet is goofing off. It is also that quality a warrior has or quickly develops that tells him when he is walking into a trap. It isn't the kind of thing that one can adequately describe for a training manual. It is simply something that one knows. He is giving you an opportunity to develop this ability under non-lethal conditions. You have to learn to keep a mental lock on all the parties of a combat, even when they are not within your scope of vision. In the cockpit, this can be developed by frequently glancing at your radar screen, but that is not enough. Even in the twisting and violent throes of battle, you must have some idea of where your opponents and starmates are if you are to survive and be effective.

Custom Mech design

While the variety of BattleMech designs made available to us by our Clan is normally sufficient to any task, you may find that you wish to develop your own designs to undertake special missions, or simply to impress other warriors during trials. If you wish to try your hand at BattleMech Engineering, here are a few ideas to ponder:

- Decide the mech's purpose. Is it to be a fast recon mech, or is it to be a brutal slugger? Select a chassis and engine to reflect your answer to this.
- Select weapons that will enhance its purpose, not detract from it. Ammo- requiring weapons do not belong on a mech that will be on long-ranged missions far from the supply routes.
- Place the weapons where they will survive the longest. Clustering your weapons in the arms is never a good idea. Try to move them to the torso where possible.
- Get as much armor as your mech will carry. This is my personal preference. I will gladly give up a laser for another ton of armor. In the thick of a furball, you will always want more armor.

Nick Svolos

TFX: Eurofighter 2000 — The wait is over!

You're going straight up in blower, staring out the top of the canopy at a Fulcrum jockey who's matching you move for move. You know he's beaked at you because you just splashed two of his wingmen. Your missile rails are empty now; this will be a gunfight unless your wingman shows a little hustle and gets in this thing. Then the voice of the AWACS controller fills your helmet; "Condor 01, incursion by hostiles at 47 degrees, 70 miles. Can you intercept?" Now you *really* start to sweat!

Make no mistake, the new **Eurofighter 2000** game is full of action. While its genesis lies in *Ocean's* 1993 release of **TFX**, **EF2000** is all new and a giant leap forward from its predecessor. It's a much more complex game, with excellent 600x480 SVGA graphics. *Ocean Software, LTD and Digital Image Design LTD* have created an air combat game set in the near future. There are thirty different planes, a huge combat theater, reportedly accurate flight models, smart wingmen, tons of targets, an advanced AI to control the wargame and network play.

SVGA, high detail opening of Mission 1. Bandits at 12 o'clock! Note "Burn" and "100" in lower left corner of glareshield

Speed is life!

This old fighter cliché is especially true with **EF2000**; faster is *much* better. However, in this case, we are talking about CPU speed.

If you're the typical air combat sim enthusiast, you'll rip open the box, shove the CD into the drive and start engines as soon as it finishes loading. Not so fast, Ace! Depending on the computer you are using, you may also need to make some careful choices in the "Preference" set up menu. Get to this menu by using the "config" command at the **EF2000** prompt. While *Ocean* specifies a minimum of a 486/66 with 8Mb of RAM, the recommended box is a Pentium 90 or faster with 16 Mb of RAM. On the slower machines it will probably be necessary to select the 320x200 resolution and medium detail to get an acceptable frame rate. You may even have to go to low detail. You can also turn the music off to get a little more speed; you won't miss it. Keep the speech and sound effects on; they definitely focus your attention on the aural warnings you get. You'll have to experiment to find the best settings for your computer.

Radar. The DWN switch is on and the left bandit is locked but out of range. Be patient!

While in the game, you can alter some of these settings. Just <Shift> and <~> (the key to the left of the 1 in the top row) to bring up the in-game option menu. When the action is slow, you can enjoy the high resolution and detail on a 486. The scenery and aircraft views are excellent. However, you'll need to switch back before engaging airborne or ground targets. If you don't, the slow screen updates will have you desperately overcontrolling the aircraft. You'll find it helpful to adjust joystick sensitivity during the game. When performing some of the "finesse" maneuvers like air refueling and landing, sliding the sensitivity left to about one fourth of the scale will help. It may keep you from suddenly terminating your mission and career! Once again, before you engage, you'll want to reset the stick to a more aggressive sensitivity for full control authority. Experiment to find the feel you prefer.

The best offense is a good defense

Now that you know a few tricks for getting the display right to fight, jump in on an "instant action" mission. These will familiarize you with what to expect in the campaign, while satisfying the urge to merge that overwhelms most of us when we buy a new flight sim. Let's use mission #1 for an example and set the difficulty at "Topgun"; train with the best!

You'll find yourself climbing out with a wingman and inbound bandits. Select full throttle and afterburner. Just selecting afterburner does not automatically give you full throttle. To get max climb rate, make sure you are at 100% and in burner. Power settings are visible in the lower right corner of the windshield. Get the nose up to about 60 degrees. Now hit <P> to pause the game. Take a quick trip around the cockpit to set yourself up for combat.

DASS-A fighter pilot's best friend! The MFD, DAS and ECM are on. Bogies are 12 o'clock and 60 miles

Your Eurofighter is equipped with DASS, a Defensive Aids Sub System. The DASS combines an advanced radar warning receiver, an infrared warning receiver, laser warning, a towed decoy, automatic Identification Friend or Foe (IFF), an ability to sort threats and automatic flare and chaff dispensing. Obviously, this system is a major asset, so make sure it is on *before* you engage. In the instant action missions it will be, but in the campaigns the default position is off. Get in the habit of making sure it is on. Press <D> on the keyboard and then use the mouse to press the "DAS" button on the right MFD (Multi-Function Display) and set the range to 60. Note that when a MFD button is "on," the letters turn yellow. Green letters mean it's off.

Turn ECM on; the bandits already know

you're there, since the mission starts with your radar locked on. If you were trying to sneak up on them, you'd want to be sure ECM is off. They can pick up ECM emissions just as they do a radar; don't announce your presence with it inadvertently.

This same right MFD will show your weapons loadout and other stores. If you are carrying extra fuel tanks, now would be a good time to jettison them. Mission #1 has an all-missile loadout, however. Just remember to clean it up before you engage when you're in a campaign.

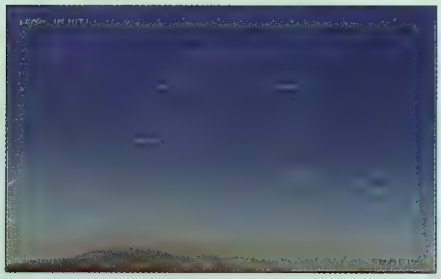
Push <R> on the keyboard and you'll get the left MFD showing a radar display. Push the <DWN> button to look down. Since you're going vertical, you need the radar in this mode to track the bandits.

The best defense is a good offense!

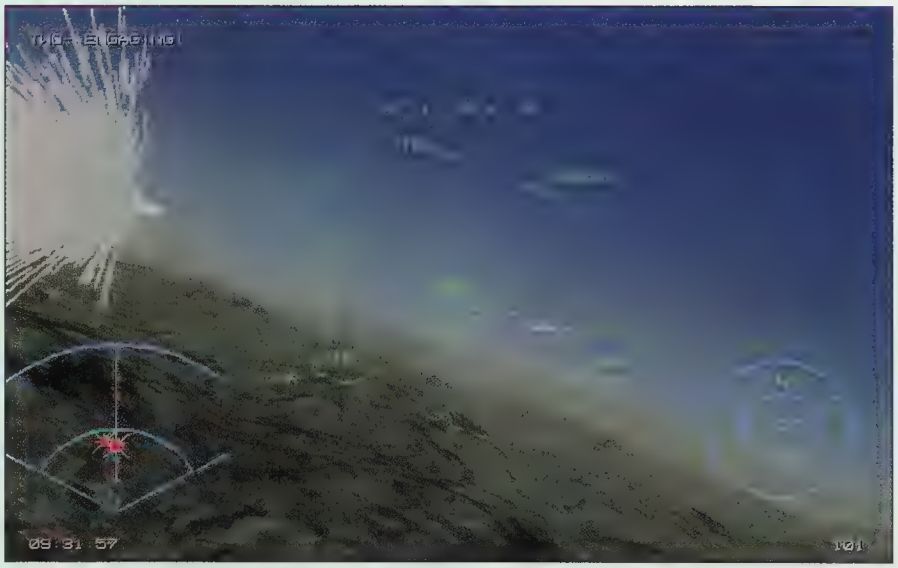
Push <F1> to go back to the HUD view and hit "enter" to cycle through your air-to-air weapons. Select S25, your long range radar missile. For all missiles, certain procedures will help you get a kill. Generally, the higher the altitude of launch, the longer the range of the missile, due to factors like thinner air and lower drag. The faster you go, the more kinetic energy the missile will have and thus a slightly longer range as well. You will improve your chances of a hit significantly if you launch with the target locked inside the missile aiming circle on the HUD.

Now look closely at the target box in the HUD. An arrowhead or "caret" should be above or below the box. A caret above the box denotes a target moving towards you; below the box, he's moving away. In the lower right corner of the HUD the type of target is identified by a letter. "F" is fighter, "B" is bomber, "A" is AWACS. etc. Range will be shown after the type. Clearly, you want to splash the closing fighters first and the farther away the better! Your missile also has more range, since the target is coming to it. Save the bombers for gun targets. Press the <C> key to cycle the radar lock through the targets and then lock up the closest fighter.

You're ready in the cockpit, now use the resources outside your aircraft. Press



Missiles on the way! Look out, Ivan!



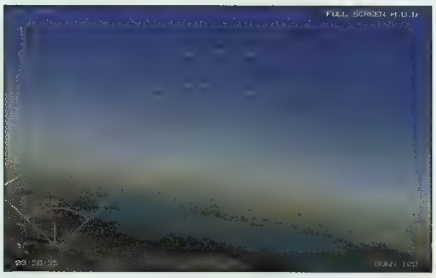
Wide Angle HUD view with radar to left. This is a good view for fighting. Note caret above target box; he's coming for you!

<TAB> to bring up the comm menu, pick "formation" and select "battle". Your wingman will acknowledge and move into combat spread.

Shoot Iuke, you're covered

Now press the pause key again and begin the engagement. Press <F1> to get the wide angle HUD view; it will also show the radar situation to the side. Keep climbing until you hear the warbling tone that tells you the S25 is locked on. Press <R> to switch back to radar and turn off <DWN> to get the radar picture you need. Lower your nose until you have the locked fighter in the missile kill circle. Don't shoot until you have the bandit well inside the missile envelope. The long white vertical line on the left side of the HUD is your weapon range bar; wait until the caret slides about a third of the way down from the top. When it does, shoot and hit <C> to cycle to another fighter. Quickly lock and shoot three more bandits and you'll be out of S25's. Break hard about 40 degrees away from the bandits and climb. On climb out, use the comm menu to tell your wingman to engage. Don't worry, there'll be enough glory for everyone in this fight.

This pull up and away from the bandits will cool the engagement off by decreasing the closure rate. It gives your missiles time to work, and it may keep you out of the bandits' missile envelope for a bit longer. While they bleed energy dodging your missiles, your wingman will be shooting at them. Use this time to select your AIM-120 Slammers (AMR in the HUD), the next longest range missile on board. Get some separation and do a slow turn back into the bandits; put the



Normal HUD view. Note S25 missile selected in lower left corner. Data in lower right corner shows a fighter locked at 58 miles closing at 540 knots

Slammers to work as soon as the caret is at least a third of the way down the range bar. Remember to center them in the kill circle before shooting! A target box with an "X" through it already has a missile allocated to it; try to find blank boxes. Shoot all your Slammers and again pull away to decrease closure and give yourself time to set up.

Select ASR, your short range IR missile, and look for surviving bandits on the radar. Turn into them and get ready to shoot. Come out of burner; you are going to get in close and "reheat" is going to look like free lunch to the enemy IR missiles. With a little luck, you and your wingie will be able to finish the fighters and have a field day on the bombers with guns. When you accomplish that, the mission will terminate and you'll move on to mission #2.

You'll enjoy this game; it looks like it has enough depth to keep you busy quite a while. Next month, the focus will be on the training program that prepares you for the campaign.

John Nolan

World War II Fighters: at the edges of the envelope

Lieutenant Yamaguchi in his light gray model 21 Zero coolly eyes the blue Wildcat below him. Then he dives out of the sun. As his speed passes a low 261 knots, his Zero gets extremely slow to roll. After his pass, he pulls up to a crawling 65 knots. At that speed, under perfect control, he positions himself for another pass. What's this? A two-ton fighter that's controllable at speeds a Cessna would fly? A World War II (WW2) fighter that's hard to roll at only 261 knots, while some others (like the Mustang) can dive under good control to over 400 knots indicated airspeed? Yes! According to flight tests and modern pilots who fly WW2 airplanes (warbirds), WW2 fighters do some amazing things! Let us investigate some low and high speed flight characteristics of specific WW2 fighters so you can compare them with the performances in your favorite flight simulator.

All WW2 fighters do *not* fly alike. Because of this fact you can exploit their actual high and low speed strengths and weaknesses in combat flight simulators (if they are modeled). Sources here come from actual WW2 flight tests, and modern pilots who record what happens at what airspeeds. How accurate is the data?

The answer is that because of a myriad of conditions, everything can be off by around 3-4 knots. Pilots who have flown the WW2 configured versions and the modern ones also claim that they are different by 3-4 knots. To conclude a lot of aerodynamic lingo, both versions fly around 3-4 knots of each other for reasons of power differences, fuel octane differences and often modern weight additions. Now, how about low speed characteristics?

I will not cover some airplanes simply because of a lack of space. However, the ones mentioned will still give you a good feel for the high and low speed flight characteristics of WW2 fighters. Some exceptional airplanes can fly at extremely slow speeds and still be controllable. This means being able to maintain altitude persistently, as well as being able to turn and maneuver at slow speeds.

Getting to the numbers

Some aircraft – like the Confederate Air Force's Zero 21 – can maintain altitude at a quarter to a half power at 65 knots, gear and flaps down, and "climb like a bat at full power" at 65 knots. Both the Planes of Fame Museum's Zeroes model 62 knots at 70% power, and the Confederate Air Force's Wildcat flies at 65 knots with good control. Bill Greenwood's Spitfire Mk 9 flies controllably at only 63 knots. Mark Hanna, a warbird pilot, and the Hellcat manual report that the modern Hawker Hurricane and the Hellcat respectively, are both controllable at 60 knots.

Notice that all these airplanes are either early-war fighters just out of the biplane age, or carrier landing aircraft and not known for being the fastest airplanes of the war. These actual carrier landing fighters during WW2 are designed to be controllable at slow speeds, so that carrier landings will be safer (have you been having any trouble landing on carriers in recent simulations? If so, check to see if they are controllable at these speeds!). With oversized ailerons on its wings, the Zero 21 is particularly maneuverable and stable at low airspeeds compared with other fighters, according to a 1942 *Technical Aviation Intelligence Brief #3*. A 1942 flight test states that at the speed at which other fighters stall, the Zero is still in its element (around the 65 knots region).

You can really haul the Spitfire around at low airspeeds

You can out roll Zeros at high speeds

Use your better rate of roll at high airspeeds

The Me109 and Spitfire also have ailerons effective right down to the stall, according to a 1940 flight test and Mark Hanna, a warbird pilot. The Mustang I flew with its high speed wing, however, has extremely spongy, almost useless, ailerons near the stall and requires very delicate handling. Other fighters like the P-40, P-39, Spitfire, and Zero can really be hauled around in low airspeed turns to the stall buffet. Not the Mustang or Corsair, however.

Loop and stall speeds

Now let us examine minimum loop speeds. These are even more remarkable. Alex Henshaw, a WW2 test pilot, reports routinely looping a Spitfire Mk5 from 118 knots in perfect conditions! Even when you factor in more normal conditions, the result is still an extremely low airspeed from which to start a loop. Randy Wilson (of the Confederate Air Force) states that their modern *heavier* than WW2 loaded Zero 21 can loop from 120 knots or less as well, as further corroboration. Stallion 51 Corporation reports that their Mustang

is able to loop from 160-180 knots by using correct technique. What this means is that in flight simulations in certain aircraft, you should be able to pull off some amazing stunts against opponents in low speed dogfights.

How about flight characteristics at the stall? According to flight tests, most WW2 fighters drop a wing at the stall. In accelerated stalls, the Corsair always drops a right wing, no matter what direction the turn. In most fighters, rudder can stop wing drop. The Mustang, Corsair and FW-190A are examples where this is not always so. An occasional uncontrollable wing drop to inverted is not unheard of. For warning of the stall, most fighters have a light airframe buffet about 5 knots or so above the stall. In accelerated stalls an increasing airframe drumming or thumping noise is often heard over the engine, from what I and warbird pilot Bruce Lockwood have observed. Some fighters give very little notice of a stall compared with others. The Mustang, FW-190A and Yak 3 are aircraft which can flick out on you with little warning.

At the high end

How about high speed flight characteristics? The overwhelming majority of World War II fighters get a slower roll rate at higher speeds, some at only medium speeds. It is just a matter of when and to what degree. Some rare few cases with special boost controls, like the later Lightnings, do not. Very simply, as speed increases, you have to start fighting air resistance. The P-51 Mustang, with its high speed wing and comparatively small ailerons, is not as badly affected as some other fighters. The high speed Corsair and FW-190A are other examples of fighters not severely affected at high speeds in roll. Flight tests I have available state that the Mustang's roll rate decreases from 4.8 seconds at 200 knots, to 6.4 seconds to the right at 261knots, to 10.4 seconds at 348 knots. The Me 109E, however, goes from about 4.5 seconds to the right at 200 knots to a molasses-slow 32 seconds at 348 knots. This is basically "seized," as some test pilots report.

To what purpose?

Such performance differences are obvious, and can be exploited in combat. The Me 109E's pitch rate is so bad at only 174 knots and the FW-190A's so bad at 304 knots that WW2 tests say the rate severely hampers maneuverability in combat. High speeds also heavily affect the Spitfire Mk 9. At 348 knots, a flight test reports, the Spitfire Mk 9's roll rate slows up to the point where it's slower than the Mustang's! The Zero 21 is a classic case of roll rate being a liability. At only 200 knots it starts getting slow to roll. By 300 it is almost useless. The roll problem is so exploitable, that a WW2 directive to US pilots recommends suckering a trailing Zero into a dive and starting a diving turn at 200 knots to escape!

The rolling of different airplanes under g loads is also startling. The Ellis flight test states that most WW2 fighters reveal a distinctive slowing down of the roll rate under g. The Mustang, for instance, has a 25% reduction in roll rate at 3g. The P-47 Thunderbolt however, shows absolutely *no* slowing down at all to the left and marginal to the right under g. These differences are critical in combat.

Test pilot Alex Henshaw reports routinely looping a Spitfire Mk5 from 118 knots

The Corsair handles sloppily at low airspeeds

Hitting the extremities

What happens at extreme speeds? In reality it depends on the airplane. However, the Mustang manual and some of my own Mustang experience make clear that you can reduce speed in a dive by simply reducing throttle. By going into a high speed dive, the Mustang yaws to the right, becomes increasingly tail heavy, gets rock solid rudder pedals and very heavy ailerons and elevator. When going too fast in the Mustang, you reach compressibility, where shock waves affect the airplane. The Mustang manual states that an uncontrollable, increasingly violent pitching up and down movement develops as the speed gets ever closer to the speed of sound. Every airplane reacts differently as dive speed increases – buffeting, pitching, rolling, stiffening of controls or the nose creeping up or down. In certain situations, some fighters simply self destruct due to airframe stress.

These are some examples to help clarify how different fighters fly at low and high speeds. Now see how your PC flight simulations measure up!

Richard Ordway

You can really haul the Spitfire around at low airspeeds

TekWar

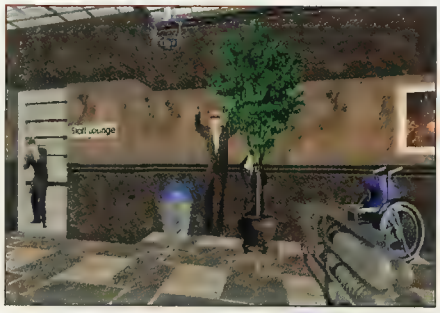
Designed by Capstone
Published by Capstone
Platform MS-DOS

There have only been, oh, 50 or 60 trillion **DOOM** clones so far, and *Capstone*'s **TekWar** is yet another. What sets it apart from the pack? Well first of all, it can run in SVGA modes, either 640x480, or a more modest 640x400. Second, it has all the perks of modern **DOOM** clones. You can aim/look up or down, jump, crouch... you know, the kinds of things you take for granted while walking to work in the morning, but that most **DOOM** clones just won't let you do. And of course, network and modem play are supported.

And then there's the license. Without being drawn into a critical debate on books or television, let's just say that **TekWar** uses the license well, in a campy sort of way. If you take it too seriously, everything falls apart. You see, *Capstone* tried to do a lot, and some parts work, while others don't. For instance, there are vehicles driving through the streets, which gives the city a more realistic feel. More realistic, that is, until a bus starts mowing down fistfuls of pedestrians!

The animation in **TekWar** could be better. You'll see a lot of digitized people in your travels; they look OK while they're standing still, but when they start to move they do a moon dance that would make Michael Jackson weep with envy. Also, there aren't enough bitmaps per figure, leading to very jerky rotations. And oh, that grainy video of William Shatner as your boss, Walter Bascom. Shatner seems to be having fun with the part and as more camp, it's fun, but technically it is really poorly done.

But what really sets **TekWar** apart from the crowd are the little flashes of police-show reality you'll encounter. For instance, someone will shoot at you, and it won't be at all clear as to where this person is. Often, as in real life, your first concern will be to take cover; *then* you can try to pin down where the shots are coming from. Actually, this can be harder than real life, since you don't have 3D audio clues; on the other hand, in real life you don't start with a thousand health points, so it's kind of a wash. Say you walk into a store and someone starts shooting at you. What would any TV cop do? He'd jump behind the



counter, crouch down, and make his way around the perimeter to flank the enemy. Well, in **TekWar**, you can do that too!

At the end of the day, it's another **DOOM** clone. But in some ways it's the most realistic **DOOM** clone we've yet seen. Heck, just the fact that it takes place in a modern city counts for something. If you're looking for something a bit different in your next shoot and scoot first person game, then, check out **TekWar**. *Capstone* is trying to turn their reputation around, and this title helps.

Peter Smith

Fury³

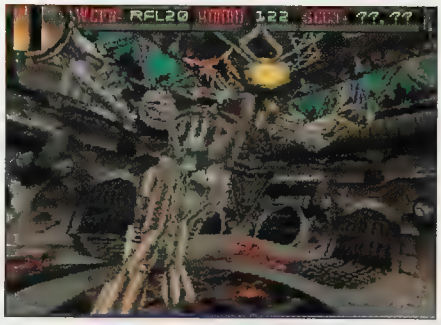
Designed by Microsoft
Published by Microsoft
Platforms PC-CDROM Windows95

So the guy who did a lot of the work on a recent version of *Microsoft*'s **Flight Simulator** decided to move on to do a fast and furious arcade game. Should we complain? No. **Fury³** is a lot of fun to play, easy to get into and a real challenge once past the first four levels. Don't let the initial impressions fool you. And no, it's not just an effort to prove that gaming can be done under Windows95. Everything I've currently got on my hard drive already proves that.

What **Fury³** *does* prove is that sometimes, the best games are the simplest. *MS* has maintained this principle for a long time in their own small game releases, included with Windows, Windows NT (yes, there's a game there), Win95/Plus (**Hover** is really the first *MS* effort I've seen which is just a showcase), and in their own **Arcade Pack** (funny thing, the latter is apparently one of the hotter-selling titles over the long haul out there). **Fury³** is much more substantial as a game than anything purely game-oriented *MS* has done before, but it's still basically a fast get-in, play and get-out kind of design. Perfect for the new gamer, and sophisticated enough for even the most veteran arcade fans once you get past the introductory portions.

While I wouldn't go trading in a Saturn or Playstation on the strength of **Fury³**'s arcade play (hell, it *is* a PC game, with the legacy of the PC's less-than-ideal joystick control – although the new *MS* **Sidewinder 3D Pro** is a definite plus for play with this one), it's good enough to be competitive with other similar PC titles. It's much more purely arcade than most 3D shooter designs, which knocks it out of the category inherited by the likes of **Dark Forces** and **CyberMage**; but this is a good thing – it keeps the focus here entirely on the action, straight and sweet.

If there's any negative to say about **Fury³** it's that – like many Windows95-based real-time designs on the way – it requires switching to 640x480x256 colors SVGA graphics mode, from whatever mode you're used to working Windows95 in. For some that will be a show-stopper; the whole principle of booting a game up for a brief play from within the work environment without big system changes is defeated by this fact (unless you're working in 640x480 mode). On the other hand, *MS* already has a utility in the works that should enable mode-switching on-the-fly



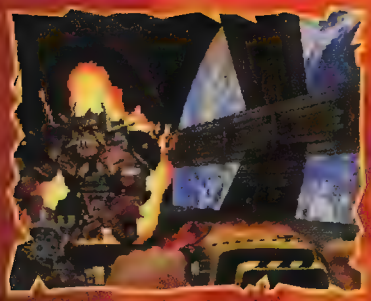
without shutdown and restart, which I think would be the single largest contribution the company could make to Win95-based gaming right now.

For new gamers in particular, **Fury³** would be a perfect stocking-stuffer – it's designed to work in a PC environment itself designed to make gaming an easy fit for this audience. For veterans in the ongoing PC OS struggle, **Fury³** is easy to install, and a breath of fresh air in sheer playability at a time when way too many action-oriented projects out there are threatening to sink under the weight of their own excesses.

Steve Wartofsky

"It makes pretty much every PC game we've ever seen - Doom included - look slightly dull. Honestly."
— PC Gamer

"Duke truly looks like a 3D supermodel of a game: sleek, sexy and gory with lead-thrashing action."
— Strategy Plus



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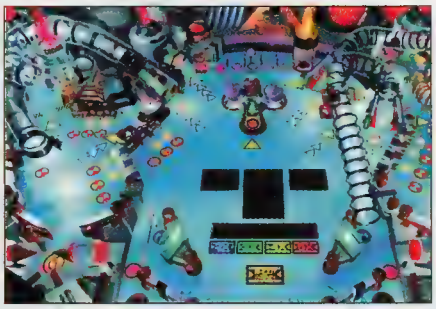
3D Ultra Pinball

Designed by Jeff Tunnell Productions
Published by Sierra On-Line
Platform Windows 3.1, 95

If you've recently visited an arcade, chances are some of the latest and greatest pinball machines have been on display. They feature the likes of dot-mation animated screens, digital voices, and other features that almost make the pinball machine seem like a state-of-the-art computer game. Of course, as pinball games move more towards computers, computers move more towards pinball, with an increasing number of pinball simulations. The first to gain wide acclaim was **Epic Pinball**, and ever since then, silver ball fans have had next to nothing to dazzle their plungers and excite their flippers. That is until now.



3D Ultra Pinball from *Sierra On-Line* is a hybrid pinball game which is a realistic on one tier, and a detailed strategy and adventure game on the next level. The three different pinball tables, which are all connected together, are loosely based on a space theme. Each table takes some liberty with the concept of pinball, adding unique objects such as flying vehicles and bulldozers to the mix. This creates an experience which is unique, yet still lends itself to the true definition of a pinball table.

Running under Windows '95, unlike some other pinball titles, the table does not scroll up and down, and this design decision has some positive and negative aspects. On the plus side, it is much easier to orient yourself with the table, but as a result the ball is much smaller and at times I felt removed from the action. What helps to immerse you in the game are the three well-designed tables, which have numerous bonus stages, 3D animation, and smashing music.

3D Ultra Pinball still suffers from the plague of all pinball games, that being the fact that the underlying concept is somewhat shallow. Nonetheless, of particular interest is the multi-ball play, and the ability

to transport between the three different tables through selected warp stations. The on-line manual is worth special mention, as it includes an interesting and detailed pinball shot guide, exploring the physics of the game.

Previously, we've seen computer pinball simulations which cater to realism, but **3D Ultra Pinball** takes some liberty with the concept. The outcome is a unique and original game, setting this title apart from the rest of the pack. Sierra has thrown pinball into a blender with a dash of multimedia, and the result is a game that *tilts* the scales in its favor [*ouch*].

Geoff Keighley

Supreme Warrior

Designed by Digital Pictures
Published by Acclaim Distribution, Inc.
Platforms DOS, Windows 95, Macintosh

Say the words, "Full-Motion-Video," and you almost have to mention Tom Zito's company, *Digital Pictures*, in the same breath. He was the evil instigator of the Congressionally-maligned **Night Trap**. Although many gamers will also utter a "colorful metaphor" in the breath immediately afterwards, give Zito his due.

Each new release from *Digital Pictures* has upped the interactiveness quota and surprised many others with how much fun an FMV game could deliver. **Supreme Warrior** solidly takes FMV to higher levels in both of these areas.

Supreme Warrior is a fresh take on the **Street Fighter/Mortal Kombat** console games crossing over into the PC market. All the allure of these side-scrolling fighting games are present in a unique, in-your-face perspective. Not only are all the basic martial art movements such as palm-strikes and sidekicks present, but also combos that leave your opponents helpless to continued strikes. It's even possible to let loose with such things as fireballs later in the game.

The combat takes place with a warlord or his bodyguards taunting the gamer while launching into a series of strikes and kicks. There will be moments where they leave themselves open to a well-timed punch or kick. Attack at the right moment and there's a quick shot of your blow snapping the person's head sideways or doubling up from a devastating kick. For the reflexively-challenged, there are a variety of difficulty levels. These include novice levels that have on-screen icons to help time the attacks for the most opportune moment.

Zito isn't cheap. The video was shot on location in Hong Kong. If you've been up at 2 am watching bad karate movies, you'll recognize several of the actors. There's even that familiar "grasshopper" zen-monk-guy from the old **Kung Fu** televisions series. So if you've found yourself playing **Mortal Kombat 2** on your kid brother's

Sega Genesis while no one was watching, **Supreme Warrior** may just be innovative enough to convince you that there's a place for FMV games on the PC.

Chuck Klimushyn

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Computer Gaming World
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– Sailing Magazine
June, 1995

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Al Unser Jr. Arcade Racing

Designed by Mindscape Bordeaux
Published by Mindscape
Platform Windows 95, Mac

Mindscape's **Al Unser Jr. Arcade Racing** is a significant program. As one of the first non-puzzle games for Windows 95, it provides at least a glimpse into what that operating system offers gamers. As such, it's encouraging in some respects, but overall a disappointment.

As the name implies, this is an arcade game, not a simulation of any sorts, and makes no pretenses toward being a sim, instead content as **Pole Position** incarnate. Unfortunately, it makes few pretenses toward being a very good arcade game, lacking the sharp controls that every joystick basher should have. Despite there being 15 different tracks, they all pretty much look the same. The music and sound is repetitive and dull, but I must say I quite liked the announcer's feeble attempt at an American accent (**Al** was developed in France).

In pointing to the future of Windows games, one thing becomes abundantly clear – if you don't already own one, a Pentium will be in your future. The game is unplayable on *Mindscape*'s own minimum machine requirement (a 486/66). Playing the game on that machine vs. a Pentium 60 makes a world of difference. More memory makes a huge impact on the speed of the game as well (while it's decent with eight megabytes of RAM, 16 would be the perfect number).

On that Pentium, though, the game is fairly impressive looking. The opponent cars are fairly uninteresting, but the backgrounds, despite their similar appearance from track to track, are pretty good looking. It's not too difficult to see a bit of **IndyCar** in **Al**, and it gives the gamer some hope that the Windows 95 version of **IndyCar II** will actually be playable.

The game isn't horrible, just average. With better controls it may have been enjoyable. If you have a Pentium, go buy **Need for Speed** and play it in DOS. If you're Pentium deficient go buy **SuperKarts**, which is an absolute blast.

Steve Bauman

Abuse

Designed by Crack dot Com
Published by Crack dot Com
Platforms DOS, Linux, SGI

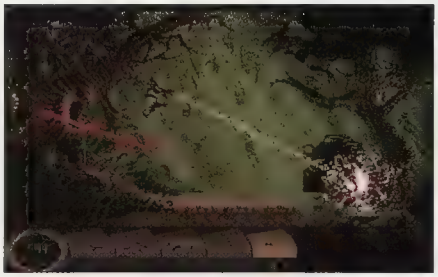
Newcomers *Crack dot Com* have put the finishing touches on **Abuse,** their platform game for the PC. In it, your mission is to single-handedly take on the Ant hordes and save humankind and... well, let's face it, the fiction doesn't matter. Your mission is to kill things, work through the puzzles, and get to the next level!

The first thing you'll notice about **Abuse** are the controls. Simple yet brilliant. You use the arrow keys to move around, and you use the mouse to aim and fire. For the first time since playing **Smash TV**, we can run in one direction and fire frantically behind us.... and it works! The only other controls are the right <Control> key and the <Ins> key on the keypad. These are used to switch between available weapons.

There are two basic philosophies in platform games. The first forces you along a linear path from start to finish. When you beat the game, you've seen and done everything. The second philosophy offers multiple paths. The additional freedom is invigorating, but the danger is that players will dash quickly through each level, finish the game, then complain it isn't long enough. **Abuse** follows the second philosophy. There are many nooks and crannies you can bypass on your first time through the game.

The levels included with **Abuse** are a decent mixture of action and puzzle. There are lots of switches to toggle, teleporters to jump through, and lifts to ride. The action consists of alternating periods of fast and furious destruction followed by exploration. The puzzles tend towards the easy side, so in this set of levels, action is king. One nice aspect is that the game doesn't "cheat." If a gun turret is firing at you from off-screen, you can shoot back at it and destroy it. I *hate* games where unseen and untouchable enemies can take potshots at you!

You'll notice I keep mentioning the levels as if they're an add-on. Well, *Crack dot Com* went to school on **DOOM** and



they learned their lesson well. **Abuse** comes with a level editor, so you can design your own. It isn't terribly slick, but it is terribly powerful. We're gamers, not programmers, but we'll regurgitate *Crack dot Com*'s geek-speak and tell you the editor includes an extendible Lisp-style language which supports objects and gives you great gobs of power (did we sound like we know what we're talking about??).

The folks who make up *Crack dot Com* are true cybernauts; they have a web page devoted to **Abuse** and level development, with a news group and irc channel to follow. This is all well and good for game hackers, and should provide a steady stream of new levels to play. But those of you content to simply *play* a game, rest assured: right out of the box (or right off the net—a shareware version is at **www.crack.com**), **Abuse** is a fine example of that classic genre, the platform game.

Peter Smith

pinball illusions

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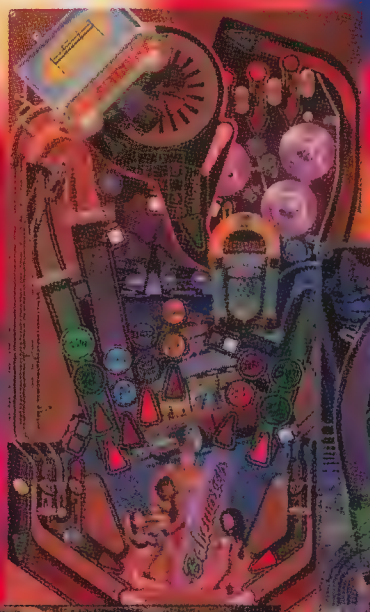

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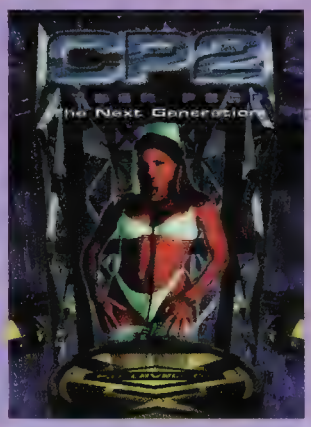

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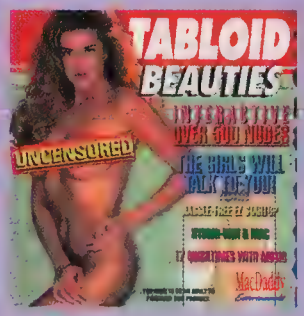

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Qwirks

Designed by Alexey Pajitnov
Published by Spectrum HoloByte
Platforms Windows 3.1/ 95

Perhaps you've heard of **Tetris**? Y'see, it was this game that came out a few years ago and... what's that? Oh, you *have* heard of **Tetris**. Well, world renowned game designer and **Tetris** papa Alexey Pajitnov is at it again. **Qwirks** is his new puzzle game, from *Spectrum HoloByte*.

Surprisingly enough (ya, right), it reminds us of **Tetris**. You see, qwirks are these little gelatinous creatures that fall out of the sky in pairs. For each pair, one qwirk is the anchor qwirk, and the other can rotate around the anchor. Qwirks come in various colors, and if four of the same color pile up so they are touching they "transmigrate" (ok, they disappear). Sound familiar yet?

OK, so where does **Qwirks** differ from a zillion other **Tetris** clones? Well, for one thing, it is sickeningly cute. The qwirks (did I mention they have eyes?) jiggle and bounce, and your opponents take the form of all kinds of cutesy creatures. If you can get past that (or if you enjoy this sort of thing) you'll find that there are several very different modes of play.

Practice mode is like classic **Tetris**. It's you against the bin as the qwirks pile up. In challenge mode, you go up against an opponent (either human or computer). In this mode, every time you transmigrate some qwirks, a clear qwirk drops in your opponent's bin. If you eliminate a bunch of qwirks through a chain reaction, lots of clear qwirks will drop. Clear qwirks can only be eliminated by the transmogrification of an adjacent group of qwirks. Yeah, they're a real pain. If you're lucky, when you eliminate a bunch of qwirks through a chain reaction, a crystal qwirk may drop on your side. When this guy is eliminated, he'll do you some nice boon.

The last mode is puzzle mode. In these games, you start with some qwirks in your bin already, and you're given a specific combination of dropping qwirks. The goal here is to use all the dropping qwirks in such a way as to end up with no qwirks left. It's a much more cerebral game, and I can't recall a similar mode of play in any of the other **Tetris** clones.

Qwirks does have one quirk (sorry, I had to) which makes it less than perfect. In challenge mode, the speed of the game increases to a totally frantic pace very quickly. By level 11, my reflexes were not fast enough to turn and move the qwirks before they hit the bottom of the bin. In addition, my computer opponent was killer. It seemed I had a constant rain of crystal qwirks on my side. And this was on easy level!! It'd be nice to see a less steep learning curve.

In all though, **Qwirks** is an amusing game. While it'd be nice to see *Spectrum HoloByte* and Pajitnov moving away from this formula and trying something really different, I guess you can't argue with success. Score another one for the **Tetris** brigade.

Peter Smith

Battle Beast

Designed by 7th Level
Published by 7th Level
Platform Windows 3.1, 95

Imagine this, a fighting game that actually shows some creativity in the design. *7th Level*'s latest Windows game, **Battle Beast**, bills itself as "The Ultimate Fight Game," and might have actually lived up to that bold pronouncement if it weren't for Windows itself.

Having said that, there's a lot to like about **Battle Beast**. It has six different beasts you can control, all with their own personalities and fighting styles. They can each morph from cute (and armed) little creatures into giant metal fighters. After beating the living crap out of your opponent, you race your opponent to the next battle region. If you win (avoiding frogs which slow you down along the way), you can bash some more frogs for extra points and discover secret areas, where you can find power-ups.

As for the presentation, *7th Level* has always done amazing work, and **Battle Beast** is no exception. The animation is fantastic, the sound effects, voices and music are perfect, and the game looks pretty much bugless (on two different machines). What the designers manage to pull off in Windows is nothing short of extraordinary, with fluid cel-based animation that rivals anything *Disney* put out, and design which puts the character back in, erm, the characters. Numerous animated interludes appear, and are well-worth watching (you can skip over them, but I have no idea why you'd want to).

The main problem with the game, and unfortunately it's a big one, is that the controls are unresponsive, too much so for a genre which demands lightening quick responsiveness. The problem is no doubt Windows. Under Windows 95, playing with the keyboard actually proved to be slightly better than using a joystick.

Overall, **Battle Beast** is a good entry level basher. Hardcore fight fans will miss the lack of graphic violence and be frustrated with the controls. But if the kids really want **Mortal Kombat** and you're terrified of the concept of them ripping each others' spines out, you might want to take a look at this less-violent alternative.

Steve Bauman

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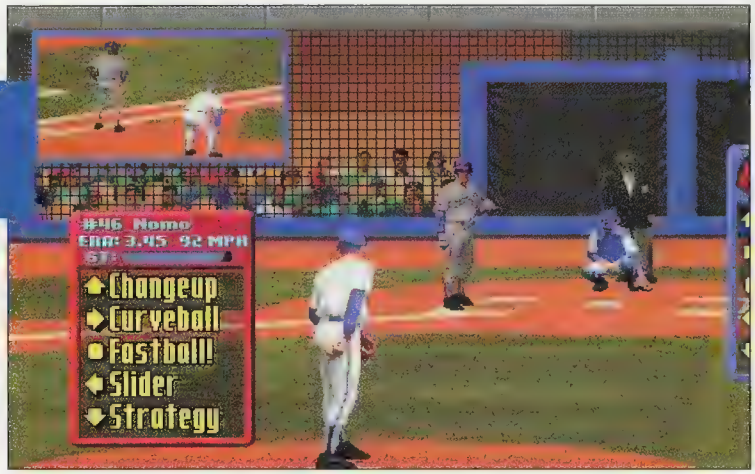
Hit the field with Hardball 5 & skin some golfers at Bighorn

As the baseball season comes to an end, *Accolade* has decided that now is the right time to release the latest in their justifiably lauded **Hardball** series, this one cleverly called **Hardball 5**. Since it seems like just yesterday we saw **Hardball 4**, you're probably asking yourself, "What does this one have to offer me?"

Review: Hardball 5
Accolade



The answer is a strong, "Not enough." In fact, it's nearly impossible to tell where or what the improvements over **Hardball 4** are as the game looks and plays nearly identically. **Hardball 4** was something of a step backwards in playability from **Hardball 3** (not to mention the classic first release, which I played to death on my *Atari* 800); hopes were thus certainly high that some of the things needing improvement in the previous games would be addressed here.

There was supposed to be an improved stat model, so I let the computer handle a series of complete seasons. Well, it looks like the increased number of stats are either wrong, or the modeling of them is off (most likely the latter). The game's always had too much offense – which isn't surprising considering its arcade slant – but now it's become bizarrely offensive. With the 1995 players, no one had too many power numbers, with just over 40 homers enough to lead both leagues in all of the seasons I simulated. Averages in the .320 to .350 range and RBI totals in the 100-110 range.

However, it seems now that *every* player had 20-30 homers, with Rex Hudler of the Angels (yes, *Rex Hudler*) finishing consecutive seasons with over 30! For comparison, Frank Thomas hit .268 with 21 homers and 74 RBI in a full season.

The pitching stats are equally bizarre. Despite the large number of homers each pitcher seems to give up (nearly every starter had given up 25-40 homers), the ERAs weren't abnormally high. However, the other stats are completely off. Jim Abbott led the American League in strikeouts (with a whopping 128 in 194 innings), while Randy Johnson came in 23rd place, with a mere 103 in 215 innings. Greg Maddux, the best pitcher of his generation (and perhaps a few others), was 8-12 with a 4.08 ERA for a Braves team that came in first-place. The next year he was 12-12.

I let the computer handle all trading and assignments, and the results were beyond bizarre. The computer traded away the entire starting pitching staff of the first-place Angels during the course of the season. The computer traded Chuck Finley and Mark Langston for Chris Hammond. I suppose the reason the computer did this is because I set it to emphasize youth over veterans, but I'd still like to see a simulation that does wheeling and dealing well.

Since the game has always been a better arcade game than a simulation it may be a bit pointless to criticize it for its poor stats (since they bother to include them, they're fair game); unfortunately the game isn't aging well even in arcade playability. The players are too big for the field (a common problem), the animation is average (players are video-captured and feature too few frames of animation to make them very convincing – rotoscoped or polygonal characters would be superior), and the in-field controls are mediocre. The pitcher-batter confrontation remains the best part of the game; hitting is particularly entertaining. As an ex-pitcher, I am thoroughly disgusted by the difficulty in striking out, or fooling, the computer batters, but this is a common problem in all of the current sims (I set the guy up with a high and tight fastball, then threw a perfect slider on the outside corner and he still pulled it for a double – sheesh, are they all Edgar Martinez?).

Presentation has always been a strength of the series, and this one is no exception. All of the menus are stylish and impressive, and I was particularly fond of the ability to edit the statistical displays. Unfortunately, the interface is poor when trying to change lineups and make substitutions. Anyone hear of "drag and drop" interfaces? This makes the interface in **Front Page Sports: Baseball** look downright elegant.

If you already own **Hardball 4** there's little reason to buy **Hardball 5**, unless you must have the current players and/or the additional stat categories. If you don't have the previous version and you're looking for a more complete simulation you're better served by *Stormfront*'s **Tony LaRussa 3** or *Sierra*'s **FPS: Baseball**. If the pitcher-batter confrontation is all you're looking for, check this one out.

Considering my long-standing admiration for this series, I have to say that **Hardball 5** is somewhat disappointing, though new players will still find a lot to like here.

Steve Bauman

Review: The Skins Game at Bighorn
Interplay

It is truly a golden age for computer golf. These days, little white dimpled ball beaters have a seemingly endless string of golfing simulations from which to choose, including several that surely rank among the best sports games going. So, why would anyone want to move to the real photography Windows-based **Skins Game at Bighorn**? Well, there's no reason, actually.

From non-sensical graphic depiction of shot-making to frustrating and repetitive play, **SGB** serves as a reminder of just how good those good games are. Aside from the pleasant enough photos of the ultra-treacherous Bighorn course, there's very little that works in this shallow and uninteresting product. Even the quote from the back of the box, "...the only golf game captured accurately on film," is flat out wrong – I guess they've never heard **of Picture Perfect Golf**.

SGB opens with a couple of five second audio bytes which substitute for a musical score and are cut off mid-phrase. Players

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are greeted with a boringly standard Windows-type options screen, where game type (skins game or regulation) and number of players are decided, and club selections made. Word of note: if a skins game *is* picked, one had better make sure they've got another human with which to play, because the game itself doesn't provide computerized competition.

Then, with virtually no fanfare, we're taken to the course. In stark contrast to games such as **Links** or **PGA Tour 96**, there's not much here, save for the standard swing meter stretched out just behind the on-screen golfer, a wind indicator, club selector, and a little icon that, if clicked, displays an aerial view of the hole. Fly-bys are also available, as are the hackneyed utterances from our caddie (who sounds strangely like a New York *cabbie*, not caddie). This guy's name is "Pooch" – as in dog.

A mediocre beginning at best, yet it just goes downhill from here. With your very first swing, you'll notice how oddly the ball behaves in motion. During tee shots and chips it seems to waver in the air, and when being putted, may suddenly stop or become somehow artificially accelerated. If it looks like it's going off course, chances are it's not, and vice-versa.

The swing motion is terribly unrealistic. Line up a two-foot putt and the golfer looks like he's just a-hammerin' that ball. Shots that seem like they'll miss the hole by a few feet suddenly disappear from the screen as the sound of a ball dropping in a hole reverberates across the speakers. How did it get in? Who knows?

Seriously, **SGB** just doesn't behave in a logical fashion. During experimentation, I hit two shots, the second much harder and straighter than the first. Yet I got an identical follow-up photo of the ball bouncing into the same cactus patch both times. Later, in chipping to the green, I purposely shot to the right, yet the next photo showed the ball coming to rest on the left. I've even misdirected lengthy putts, only to have them somehow drop (although the ball never really drops, it just sort of evaporates). If only real golfing resembled the **SGB** representation!

If it's real life photography you crave, check out **Picture Perfect Golf**. If you desperately need something to break up your Windows routine, go for **Microsoft Golf**. And, if nothing but the best will do, **PGA Tour 96** packs everything but the kitchen sink, including an edge-of-the-seat Skins Game, and wraps it up in a gorgeous television-style presentation.

Skins Game at Bighorn? A definite hazard that should be avoided.

Gordon Goble

Review

Super Sunday - An Interactive History

U.S. Gold

How much do you like football? Specifically, how much do you like the Super Bowl? With the lopsided non-games we've seen recently, there's fewer fans out there of "Super Sunday," yet for the faithful, *DiscUS Sports Inc.* has seen fit to release a product bearing just that moniker.

Actually, it's called **Super Sunday - An Interactive History Volume III**, and although this publication is a gaming magazine, there is no game to be found within. But that's okay, because what is here is bearable, if not limited in both scope and size.

SS is a neat little mix of two elements. The first revolves around the program's centerpiece, a montage of videos and photos of each of the last nine Super Bowls – the first 20 are available in Volumes I and II. Here, you'll also find visual records of each and every Super Bowl ring ever made, Super Bowl ticket artwork, an explanation of referee signals, and an all time Big Game record book. The second half of this package is called Super Bowl Trivia, and it is just that, a collection of stumpers that'll test the knowledge of even the seriously addicted.

While there are certainly some facets within this program that could be considered non-essential (who but the hard-core will argue over the prettiest ring or ticket?), some of the other stuff will find a home in the hearts of football buffs. The trivia section for instance, although pretty short at just over a couple of hundred questions, is nicely presented, and divided into several little compartments. One may elect to associate still photographs with a given game, guess the famous quote-maker, or beat the clock. The brain-teasers here aren't so trivial as to seem forced, and it's a pleasant enough temporary diversion, if you can handle the hideously muffled musical score.

Also of interest is the record book, if only for some of the seemingly odd numbers that show up. For instance, did you know that the all-time career Super Bowl sack leader (the Steelers' L.C. Greenwood over the course of four appearances) has but a measly *five* to his credit? Doesn't seem like many, but it's true, and is just a sampling of the mounds of team and individual stats on display.

So, is all this worth spending your hard earned bucks over? Hardly, but again, depending on your love for Super Sundays, the audio-video mini history of the Super Bowl might make it worthwhile.

It all begins with still photograph glimpses into the selected contest, followed

by a quarter-by-quarter full motion video summary. Most of the narration here comes via the ample vocal talents of Pat Summerall, and the footage courtesy of the libraries of *NFL Films* (this is, after all, an official NFL product), so the basics are certainly strong. Unfortunately, the visuals and narration aren't always perfectly synchronized, and the video, while not quite postage stamp size, looks sharp only at 1024x768 resolution, which constrains it to approximately one-eighth of the screen on most PCs.

If Volumes I through III were somehow Rammed together into one Giant Packer (er, package), **Super Sunday** would be a more reasonable proposition. As it is, with just nine games on film in **Volume III**, only true fans of the annual blowout need apply.

Gordon Goble

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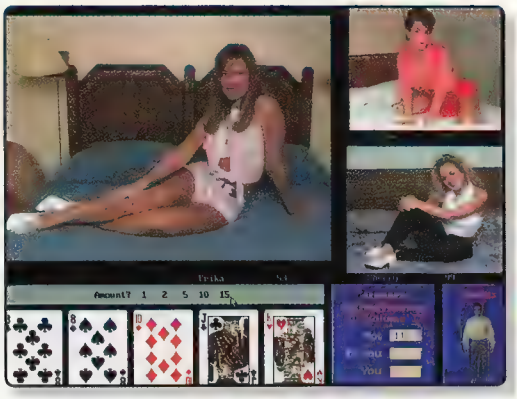

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Reader Service No. 9

In defense of the online life

Dear Editor,

Just read your editorial in my latest *S+* (the one with the **Crusader:No Remorse** cover) and I had to offer my reply.

I realize that part of your intent was just to set expectations correctly and put into proper perspective the realities of the online experience. But I still think you sold it waaayyyy short.

Has the online experience changed my life? You bet. Many of my best frieds in life were "met" online, including my current business partner. After I wrote a telecomm program for *CIS* (back when I was still a lawyer), I was offered a job as an Engineer at *Apple Computer*, a job that later led to my role as Manager of Macintosh Software Evangelism, which led to my current career, and so on and so on.

Now, I realize that my experience is anecdotal and that for every one person like myself, there are probably many others for whom the only change that will result is another bill to pay. In that sense, your warnings were well considered. But at a time when online services are finally getting off the ground (I joined *CIS* in 1979!) and vying for attention while the WWW gets all the ink, I think your readers are better served hearing how an online account *can* lead to a better life, *can* improve their personal life, can actually increase the amount of social interaction they realize in their lives.

A good friend of mine is an agoraphobic who almost *never* left his house. After getting to know him over a period years here on *CIS*, I finally met him at a *party*! This is something that might have happened anyway with enough therapy and dedication over time, but in this case his only therapy was a safely distant, electronic room full of people who gave him the support he needed to make the move on his own. You think an online account changed his life? You bet!

Another very close friend has finally left behind the pained memories of a messy divorce and her ensuing months of loneliness by discovering a new online community. She is traveling to NYC next month to meet the new man of her dreams after several months of exchanging E-mails, pictures, videos, etc. And so on.

The point is (and I realize you made this point) that the online experience shouldn't be viewed as an end itself. Rather, it's like any other social tool. It *will* amplify and expand your existing experiences to a broader audience, albeit a more distant audience. The trick is in knowing how to extract the inherent advantages from those characteristics.

Again, I understand your intentions with the piece. But I think you should follow it up at some point with a companion piece extolling the virtues of an online account, and the massive potential that *does* exist, for people with discipline and common sense, to dramatically improve their lives.

My two cents,
Bob Perez

P.S. Great review of Crusader: No Remorse, btw. One of my favorites, too!

Dear Bob,

Your eloquent letter (received online on Compuserve (CIS)) does plenty to provide the other side of the story, thank you! Yes, the stories you tell are just a few of many such I've heard. In fact, to counter the negative hype we've been hearing about online/internet lately in the press (about its uncensored ability to corrupt the minds of our youth, etc. etc.), I will say that – given the wide range of users and abilities – the productive and beneficial aspects of online communications (particularly through a well-managed service like CIS or MSN or GEnie or the many others) far outweigh the potential risks and damages. Like any other complex technology and medium out there, you can't blame the medium itself for either its misuse or for the risks it might pose to those who aren't mature enough to use it properly. The thing to recognize – part of the reason for the editorial – is that there is the potential for misuse, and it's something that should be given proper attention to by those of us familiar with the medium before uninformed extremists of various sorts make life difficult for the majority by imposing unnecessary and large-scale

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restrictions in response to a few scare stories. Thanks again for a great letter. - Ed.

Our readers chime in

Ed. note: we have received a number of letters along the lines of the one below; we'd like to note that it is, in other words, representative rather than something singled out for specific purposes.

Dear Steve Bauman,

I've read your "I Hate Critics" article and I'm very much inclined to agree with your opinion about Sierra's **Phantasmagoria**. I can't help but wonder as I'm reading your article why you're apologizing for your opinion about the game. That's what you do as a critic and I think most readers do take the game reviews with a grain of salt. I don't always agree with the reviews, and I certainly have to disagree with you about **Fade to Black**.

That game just isn't my cup of tea because of the interface and the switching of the 3rd person to the 1st person angle. Nonetheless, I do find *Strategy Plus* to be very good about your reviews because they are very informative. I pour over every word of the articles of the games that I'm interested in.

However, I'm what you might call a "newbie" for the puzzle solving/adventure/CRPG games, and **Phantasmagoria** is the first of that kind I've purchased. Although I have played other games like **Indycar Racing**, **TIE Fighter**, and **DOOM I & II** (and enjoy them a lot), I have never played a game like **Phantasmagoria**. I do have to say that I've found the first three CD's to be quite enjoyable. I keep saying to myself as I'm playing the game, "This is pretty neat stuff" (the graphics and the movie-video interaction, I mean). By the time I've gone through the infamous chase scene in CD 7, though, I'm fed up with the changing of the CD's (minor irritation) and, more importantly, the silliness of the plot. You've hit the nail on the head about Chapter 2, by the way. Drain cleaner for an entire CD!!

Leona Cheng
Vancouver, British Columbia

Dear Leona,

Please be sure to note that Steve Bauman did not apologize for his opinion of the game, rather just for the rhetoric of its presentation. That's all we ever heard complaints about anyways. Those who complained were very clear that they were perfectly willing to entertain any opinion we might like about the game; they were just upset about the way in which parts of that opinion were presented. Hopefully all is calm again everywhere.

As someone new to graphic adventures, you are not unusual in your responses to your first adventure: the kinds of things you have reacted to are typical of the kinds of complaints people not familiar with the genre have with it. Seasoned adventure gamers seem more willing to put up with plot, story and characterization that falls well short of standards for same in quality movies and books; they're also willing to forgive a game with such shortcomings if its puzzles and challenges are interesting and varied and extensive.

Unfortunately, as those designing graphic adventures are making the effort to appeal to a wider audience, they're cutting back on precisely those aspects of adventure games which have traditionally been appealing to more dedicated adventure gamers. This tends to expose the weaknesses in what has historically been the weakest part of adventure game design even more, and means that companies engaging in same are going to have to move fast to catch up with the other media they're trying to emulate in the quality of dialogue, characterization, film technique and storytelling they engage in if they're going to make graphic, cinematic adventures appealing to an audience looking for games at the same level of sophistication present in other visual media. - Ed.

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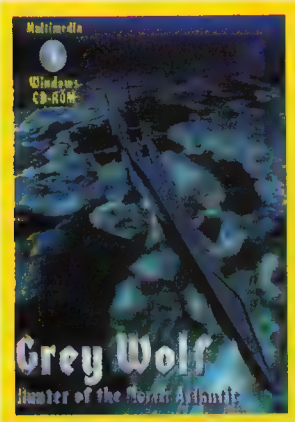

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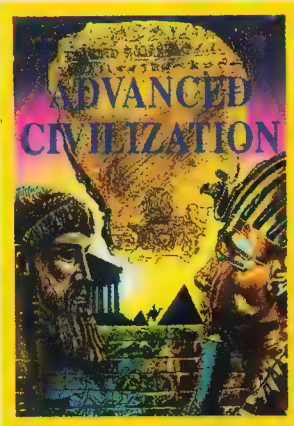

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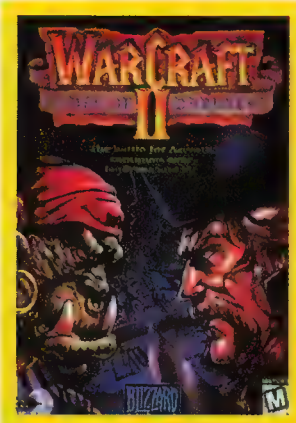

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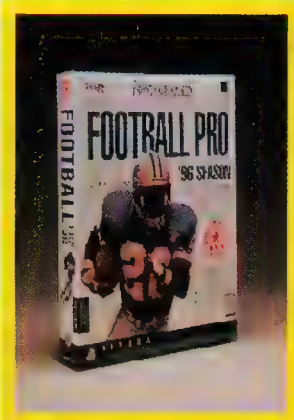

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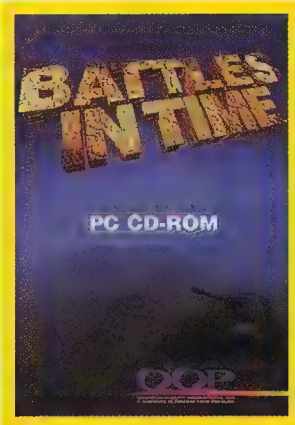

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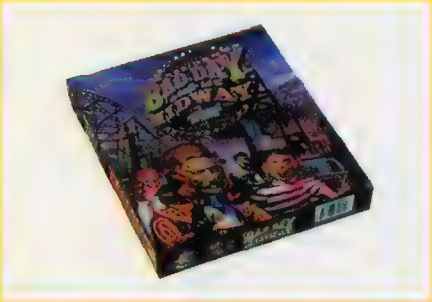

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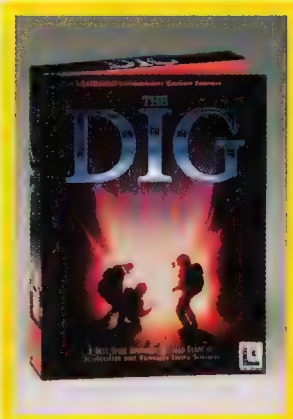

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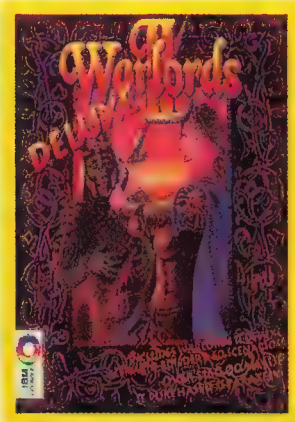

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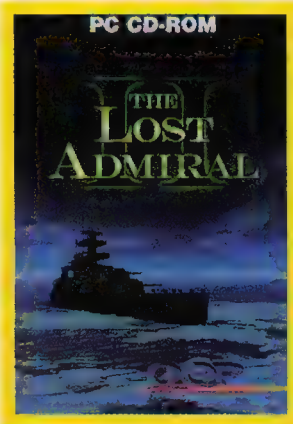

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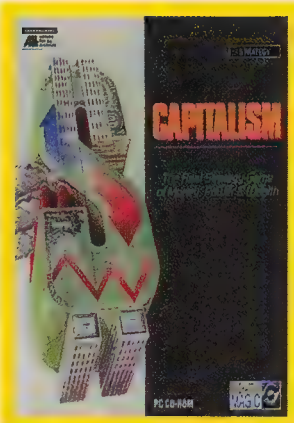

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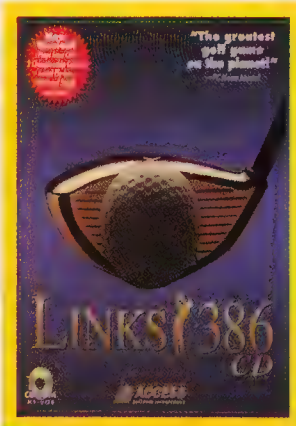

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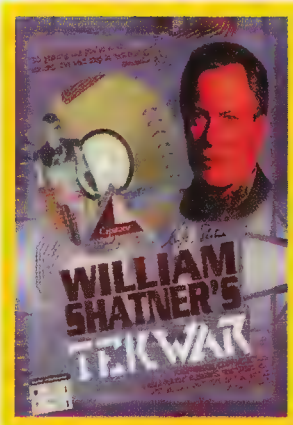

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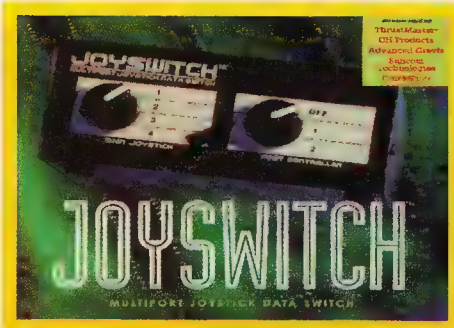

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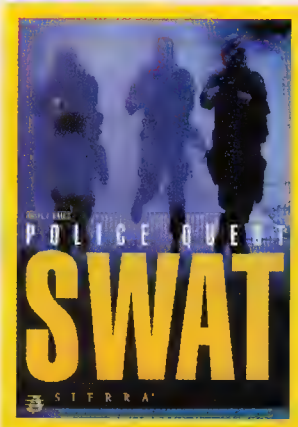

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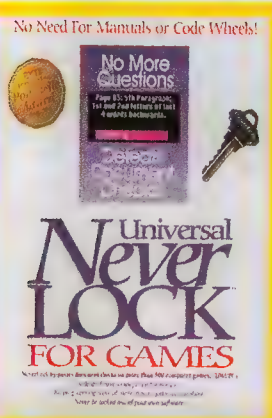

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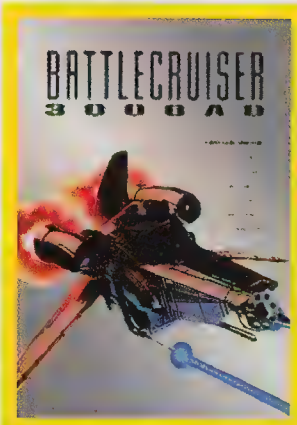

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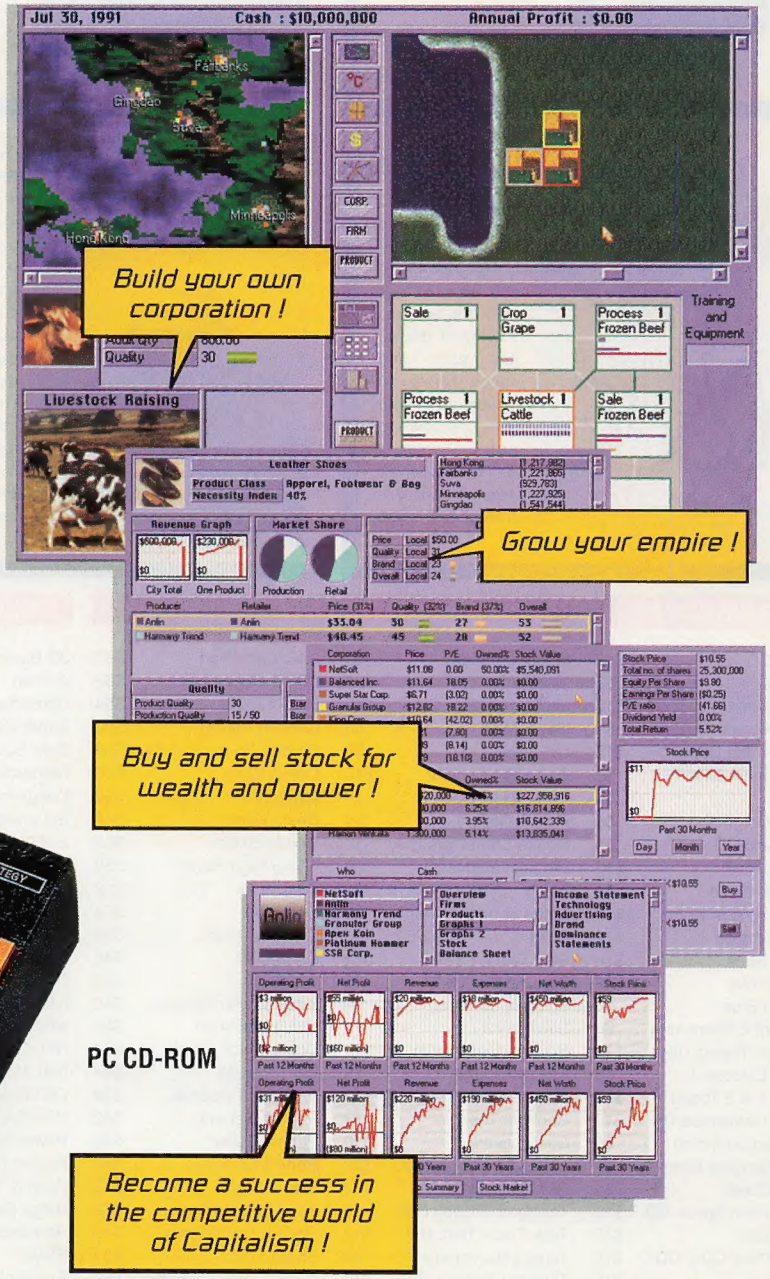

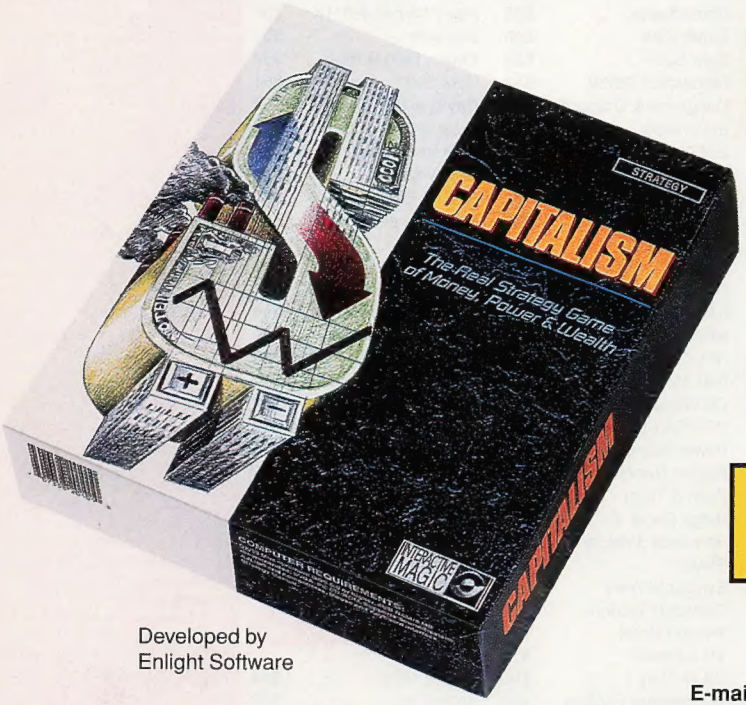

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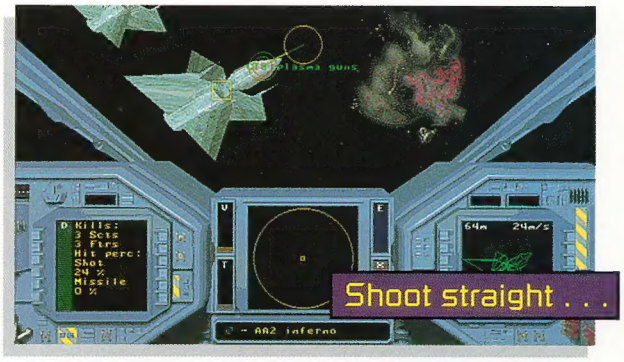

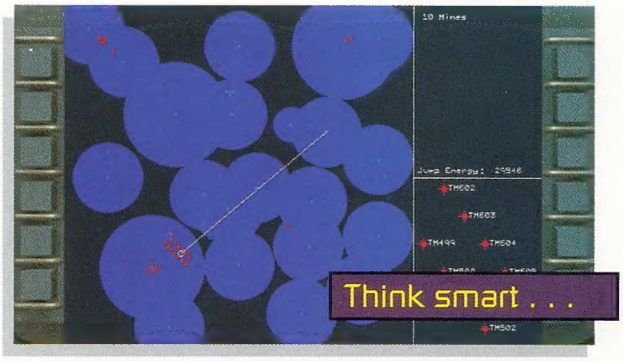

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